

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau

**Final Report**  
**Kentucky Child and Family Services Review**

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Final Report: Kentucky Child and Family Services Review**

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) assesses State performance during a specified time period on seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being and on seven systemic factors. The Kentucky CFSR was conducted the week of March 3, 2003. The assessment is based on information from the following sources:

- The Statewide Assessment prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Kentucky Cabinet for Children and Families (the Cabinet);
- The State Data Profile prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites throughout the State; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and the State-level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

A key CFSR finding in Kentucky was that only 7.1 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as having substantially achieved permanency outcome 1 – Children have permanency and stability in their living situations. Within this outcome, all cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement with regard to adoption, and 50 percent were rated as Area Needing Improvement for the indicators of permanency goal and reunification, guardianship, and placement with relatives. Stakeholders identified both agency and court-related barriers to achieving permanency. The identified court-related barriers included the reluctance of the courts and attorneys to pursue permanency goals other than reunification, particularly when termination of parental rights (TPR) is necessary, as well as delays in scheduling and completing a TPR, court continuances, and the length of TPR appeals. The primary agency-related barrier to permanency was the failure of agency caseworkers to submit the necessary paperwork to the court in a timely manner. This pertained to both scheduling 12-month permanency hearings and filing TPR petitions.

The overall findings with regard to the State’s performance on the Safety and Permanency Outcomes are presented in table 1 at the end of the Executive Summary. Table 2, also provided at the end of the Executive Summary depicts the State’s overall performance on the Well Being Outcomes, and table 3 presents data pertaining to the State’s performance on the measures for which national standards have been established.

Information from the case reviews resulted in the following outcome-related items being rated as a Strength for the State:

- Reducing risk of harm to children (item 4).
- Ensuring permanency for children with regard to alternative living options (item 10).
- Placing children in close proximity to their parents or close relatives (item 11).
- Meeting children's needs for educational services (item 21).
- Meeting children's needs for physical health services (item 22).

In addition, the data presented in the State Data Profile indicate that Kentucky met the national standard for the percentage of children reunified in Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2000 who were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care.

Despite these strengths, Kentucky was not in substantial conformity with six of the seven child and family outcomes. Also, data provided in the State Data Profile indicated that Kentucky did not meet the national standards for the following outcome measures:

- The recurrence of substantiated child maltreatment within 6 months of a prior substantiated maltreatment.
- The incidence of maltreatment of children in foster care.
- The rate of foster care re-entries within 12 months of discharge from a previous foster care episode.
- The percentage of finalized adoptions occurring within 24 months of a child's entry into foster care.
- The percentage of children experiencing no more than two placements during the first 12 months in foster care.

## **KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES**

### **Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect**

As shown in Table 1, Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 81.3 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State did not meet the national standard for (1) the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period, or (2) the percentage of children maltreated in foster care.

The case reviews revealed inconsistent practices with respect to the timeliness of initiating a response to child maltreatment reports and establishing face-to-face contact with children and families. In many cases workers did respond in a timely manner; however, in 38 percent of the applicable cases the response was not within State guidelines. In addition, delayed response was found for maltreatment reports classified as high risk, as well as those classified as low and moderate risk.

Although the case reviews did not identify extensive repeat maltreatment as defined by the item (item 2), there were several cases in which an allegation of maltreatment was reported to the caseworker on an open case and the caseworker did not formally report the allegation or investigate it. The fact that maltreatment reports on open cases are not formally reported appears to be consistent with Cabinet policy as described in the *Standards of Practice and Information Sources relevant to the Child and Family Services Review*.

Kentucky's Statewide Assessment identified a number of practices and programs in place designed to reduce the recurrence of maltreatment. This includes the CQA, the provision of wraparound services through family-team conferencing, the Targeted Assessment Project (TAP), and the Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse Linkage Project.

### **Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate**

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that this outcome was substantially achieved in 86.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

Although Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity on this outcome, in a large percentage of cases, CFSR case reviewers determined that the Cabinet had made diligent efforts to provide services to children in their own homes and to ensure that the risk of harm to children was adequately addressed. Stakeholders also reported that there are a variety of services available to ensure the protection of children while they remain in their own homes.

The case reviews, however, also identified concerns in some of the in-home services cases regarding management of risk of harm. These concerns pertained primarily to the lack of formal investigation of maltreatment allegations or follow-through on subsequent abuse/neglect allegations. In four cases, both the case files and the caseworkers indicated that an alleged maltreatment had apparently occurred while the case was open, yet nothing had been done to address the risk of harm to the children posed by this new incident. In two of these cases, the allegations were quite serious.

### **Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.**

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 7.1 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.

- The State Data Profile indicated that for Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2001, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the rate of foster care re-entries, (2) the percentage of children discharged to finalized adoptions within 24 months of entry into foster care, and (3) the percentage of children in foster care for 12 months or less who experienced no more than 2 placements.

The State did meet the national standard for the percentage of children in FFY 2001 who were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care.

The CFSR found that the Cabinet was not consistently effective in ensuring that children have permanency and stability in their living situations. Five of the six items assessed for this outcome were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. The exception was item 10 – Permanency Goal of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.

One key concern identified by case reviewers pertained to the finding that the Cabinet had not established appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner for 50 percent of the children in the foster care cases. In addition, in all cases in which adoption was the goal, reviewers determined that diligent efforts had not been made to finalize adoptions in a timely manner.

Another identified concern pertained to the finding that children in foster care in Kentucky tend to experience placement instability. Information obtained from the Statewide Assessment and from stakeholder interviews indicates that children are not being carefully matched with foster care providers at the time of placement into foster care or when a placement change is necessary. This is either because the appropriate assessments are not being conducted, or because there are an insufficient number of placement resources resulting in placement decisions being made on the basis of what is available rather than what is needed.

## **Permanency Outcome 2. The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.**

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 71.4 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although the CFSR found that the Cabinet was highly effective in placing children in foster care in close proximity to their families and communities, there were inconsistencies in practice with respect to placing siblings together, establishing frequent visitation between children and parents and siblings, maintaining children's connections to extended families and communities, and promoting positive relationships between parents and their children in foster care.

Establishing frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings was identified as a particular concern during the CFSR. Forty percent of applicable cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this indicator because the frequency and quality of visitation were determined to be insufficient to meet the needs of children and families. In addition, less than half of the cases reviewed involved visitation patterns that were consistent with Cabinet policy requiring that children in foster care visit with their parents at least once every 2 weeks. The lack of sufficient contact between parents and children also was a basis for reviewers determining that in 40 percent of the applicable cases, the Cabinet had not made adequate efforts to promote the parent-child bond.

Stakeholders commenting on the items assessed for this outcome generally expressed positive opinions regarding the efforts of the Cabinet for all items. However, several stakeholders noted that there are barriers to frequent visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings. These barriers include lack of transportation and the fact that most visits must be supervised by Cabinet staff. Some State-level stakeholders noted that the Cabinet does not provide the necessary guidance to assist caseworkers in making decisions regarding appropriate visitation supervision.

### **Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.**

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with Well Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved for 64.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

An overall CFSR finding was that the Cabinet is not consistent in its efforts to meet the service needs of children and families, with 32 percent of the cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item. The key problem pertained to the inadequacy of the assessments conducted in many of the cases, particularly the in-home services cases. In those cases in which assessments were not comprehensive, children and parents had service needs that were not addressed.

The CFSR also found inconsistencies in practice with regard to caseworker contacts with children and parents. For 22 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with children were not sufficient to ensure children's safety and promote their permanency and well-being. For 37 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with parents were not sufficient to meet the needs of the children and families. For both of these indicators, in-home services cases were more likely than foster care cases to be assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement.

Finally, the CFSR findings suggest that efforts to involve families in the case planning process are not consistently effective, with 28 percent of cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this indicator. A key concern pertains to the lack of involvement of

fathers in the case planning process in several cases. Lack of parent involvement in case planning was particularly evident in the in-home services cases.

**Well Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.**

Kentucky achieved substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 based on the finding that 95.3 percent of the cases reviewed were found to have substantially achieved this outcome, which meets the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

The CFSR found that in a large percentage of cases, the Cabinet was effective in assessing children's educational needs and providing appropriate services to meet those needs.

**Well Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.**

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 76.0 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

In general, the CFSR found that the Cabinet was highly effective in meeting children's physical health needs. In most of the cases reviewed, medical and dental services were accessible to the children and these services were provided to the children on a routine preventive basis as well as when needed. Several stakeholders, however, noted that dental services are not consistently available throughout the State.

The CFSR found that the Cabinet was less effective in its efforts to address children's mental health needs, particularly for children in the in-home services cases. Two key concerns identified by stakeholders were (1) the scarcity of mental health services in some areas of the State, and (2) the poor quality of some of the mental health services that are available.

## **II. KEY FINDINGS RELATING TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS**

### **Statewide Information System**

Kentucky achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. This determination was based on the finding that information on the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child in foster

care is readily retrievable from the State's data system. In addition, stakeholders reported that the system, TWIST, generates reports that are timely and comprehensive and can be used to create action plans, monitor outcomes, and measure staff accountability.

### **Case Review System**

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. This determination was based on the finding that the Cabinet is not consistently effective with regard to (1) actively involving parents and children in the case planning process; (2) providing a 6-month periodic review for each child in foster care; and (3) notifying and involving foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers of hearings. Although the review found that in general the 12-month permanency hearings are not routinely held in a timely manner, several stakeholders reported that timeliness and thoroughness of permanency hearings varies by jurisdiction. The CFSR also found that the State is not consistent with regard to achieving TPR in a timely manner. The primary barriers identified were the TPR appeals process and crowded court dockets.

### **Quality Assurance System**

Kentucky achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. The State has developed and implements standards to ensure the protection of health and safety of children in foster care and also maintains an effective quality assurance system that evaluates and measures program strengths and areas needing improvement. In addition, the Cabinet has a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process that is designed to assess the effectiveness of services and that involves all Cabinet staff in the evaluation of internal systems, procedures and outcomes.

According to the Statewide Assessment, State statutes, standards of practice (SOP), and internal and external monitoring systems ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services. A policy collaboration team is responsible for facilitating the development of clearly defined standards of practice.

### **Training**

Kentucky achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. The CFSR determined that the Cabinet provides a strong staff development and ongoing training program as well as effective initial training for all newly hired workers. In addition, stakeholders reported that both the initial and ongoing foster parent training programs are effective, although some stakeholders noted that only licensed foster parents are required to take the training. Despite this generally positive perception of training efforts, several stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of caseworker skills in conducting comprehensive assessments and their lack of understanding about how to effectively use information obtained from a comprehensive assessment.



## **Service Array**

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. There are significant gaps in services and services are generally not available in sufficient quantity. Stakeholders expressed concern about extended waiting periods for receiving services and noted that lack of transportation often is a barrier to families accessing services. However, it was noted that services can be individualized for families.

## **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**

Kentucky achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness. The State's Child and Family Service Plan is developed in conjunction with representatives from other agencies including the Administrative Office of the Court, the Children's Review Program, and child advocacy groups. The Cabinet has strong collaborations with external stakeholders on the State and local levels and is effective in ensuring the coordination of services with other agencies.

## **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**

Kentucky achieved substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The Cabinet maintains and implements standards for foster family homes and standards are applied to all Cabinet foster family homes and child care institutions. The Division of Licensing and Regulation establishes the standards for all residential facilities and child-caring/child-placing agencies. However, the Statewide Assessment notes that there is some variation in the standards for Cabinet foster homes and private child care foster homes (e.g., physical exams, number of children, and hours of training). The State does complete criminal background checks prior to the approval of all foster and adoptive homes and licensure is timely.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Cabinet has initiated a Diligent Recruitment Plan to meet the needs of the ethnic and racial diversity of children in foster care. The plan emphasizes the need for more homes for teenagers, sibling groups, medically fragile children and African-American youths.

Cross-jurisdictional placements are facilitated through the Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP). SNAP is designed to offer specialized recruitment efforts for children waiting for permanent placements. Stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that cross-jurisdictional placements occur.

**Table 1. CFSR Ratings for Safety and Permanency Outcomes and Items**

<b>Outcomes and Indicators</b>	<b>Outcome Ratings</b>			<b>Item Ratings</b>		
	<i><b>In Substantial Conformity?</b></i>	<i><b>Percent Substantially Achieved</b></i>	<i><b>Met National Standards?</b></i>	<i><b>Rating*</b></i>	<i><b>Percent Strength</b></i>	<i><b>Met National Standards</b></i>
Safety Outcome 1-Children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	No	81.3 (90% required for substantial conformity)	No (2)			
Item 1: Timeliness of investigations				ANI	62	
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment				ANI	98	No
Safety Outcome 2 - Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	No	86.0 (90% required for substantial conformity)				
Item 3: Services to prevent removal				ANI	81	
Item 4: Risk of harm				Strength	88	
Permanency Outcome 1- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	No	7.1 (90% required for substantial conformity)	No (3)			
Item 5: Foster care re-entry				ANI	100	No
Item 6: Stability of foster care placements				ANI	68	No
Item 7: Permanency goal for child				ANI	50	
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship and placement with relatives				ANI	50	Yes
Item 9: Adoption				ANI	0	No
Item 10: Other planned living arrangement				Strength	100	
Permanency Outcome 2 - The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	No	71.4 (90% required for substantial conformity)				
Item 11: Proximity of placement				Strength	100	
Item 12: Placement with siblings				ANI	84	
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				ANI	60	
Item 14: Preserving connections				ANI	75	
Item 15: Relative placement				ANI	79	
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents				ANI	60	

\*Items are rated either as an Area Needing Improvement (ANI) or as a Strength.

**Table 2. CFSR Ratings for Child Well Being Outcomes and Items**

<b>Outcomes and Indicators</b>	<b>Outcome Ratings</b>		<b>Item Ratings</b>			
	<i><b>In Substantial Conformity?</b></i>	<i><b>Percent Substantially Achieved</b></i>	<i><b>Met National Standards</b></i>	<i><b>Rating*</b></i>	<i><b>Percent Strength</b></i>	<i><b>Met National Standards</b></i>
Well Being Outcome 1 - Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs	No	64.0 (90% required for substantial conformity)				
Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents				ANI	68	
Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning				ANI	72	
Item 19: Worker visits with child				ANI	78	
Item 20: Worker visits with parents				ANI	63	
Well Being Outcome 2 - Children receive services to meet their educational needs	Yes	95.3 (90% required for substantial conformity)				
Item 21: Educational needs of child				Strength	95	
Well Being Outcome 3 - Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs are met	No	76.0 (90% required for substantial conformity)				
Item 22: Physical health of child				Strength	88	
Item 23: Mental health of child				ANI	81	

\*Items are rated either as an Area Needing Improvement (ANI) or as a Strength.

**Table 3: Kentucky's Performance on the Six Outcome Measures for which National Standards have been Established**

<b>Outcome Measure</b>	<b>National Standard</b>	<b>Kentucky Data</b>
Of children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report in the first 6 months of CY 2001, what percent were victims of another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period?	6.1% or less	8.6%
Of all children who were in foster care in the first 9 months of CY 2001, what % experienced maltreatment from foster parents or facility staff members?	.57% or less	.65%
Of all children who entered foster care in FY 2001, what percent were re-entering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode?	8.6% or less	10.8%
Of all children reunified from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care?	76.2% or more	82.5%
Of all children who were adopted from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were adopted within 24 months of their entry into foster care?	32.0% or more	15.9%
Of all children in foster care during FY 2001 for less than 12 months, what percent experienced no more than 2 placement settings?	86.7% or more	80.3%

## Introduction

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Kentucky. The CFSR was conducted the week of March 3, 2003. The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Kentucky Cabinet for Children and Families (the Cabinet);
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and providing child welfare data for the years 1999 through 2001;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites throughout the State; and
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State-level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

The key characteristics of the 50 cases reviewed are the following:

- 24 cases were reviewed in Jefferson County, 14 in Warren County, and 12 in Knox County.
- All 50 cases had been open cases at some time during the period under review.
- 28 cases were “foster care cases” (cases in which children were in the care and custody of the State child welfare agency and in an out-of-home placement at some time during the period under review), and 22 were “in-home services cases” (cases in which families received services from the child welfare agency while children remained in their homes and no child in the family was in out-of-home care during the period under review).
- In 32 cases, all children in the family were White; in 16 cases, all children in the family were African American; in 1 case, all children in the family were American Indian; and in 1 case, the children were of two or more races.
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, the **primary** reason for the opening of a child welfare agency case was the following:
  - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 26 cases (52%)
  - Physical abuse – 11 cases (22%)
  - Substance abuse by parents – 4 cases (8%)
  - Medical neglect – 2 cases (4%)
  - Dependency – 2 cases (4%)
  - Sexual abuse – 1 case (2%)
  - Abandonment – 1 case (2%)
  - Mental/physical health of child – 1 case (2%)
  - Domestic violence in child’s home – 1 case (2%)

- Child's behavior – 1 case (2%)
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, the most frequently cited of **all** reasons for children coming to the attention of the child welfare agency were the following:
  - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 37 cases (74%)
  - Physical abuse – 26 cases (52%)
  - Substance abuse by parents – 15 cases (30%)
  - Sexual abuse – 14 cases (28%)
  - Domestic violence in child's home – 8 cases (16%)
  - Mental/physical health of parent – 7 cases (15%)
  - Child's behavior – 5 cases (10%)
  - Medical neglect – 5 cases (10%)
  - Medical/physical health of child – 5 cases (10%)
  - Emotional maltreatment – 4 cases (8%)
- In 24 (86%) of the 28 foster care cases, the children entered foster care prior to the period under review and either remained in foster care during the entire period under review or exited foster care to adoption or independent living. Only one child who entered foster care prior to the period under review exited to reunification during the period under review.

The first section of the report presents the CFSR findings relevant to the State's performance in achieving specific outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting key findings, a discussion of the State's status with regard to the outcome, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed. For the most part, findings are presented for all three counties taken together, with differences among counties described when they are particularly noteworthy. The second section of the report provides an assessment and discussion of the systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.

## SECTION 1: OUTCOMES

### I. SAFETY

#### Safety Outcome 1

<b>Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jefferson</b>	<b>Knox</b>	<b>Warren</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	18	10	11	39	81.2
Partially Achieved:	4	1	3	8	16.7
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	1	0	1	2.1
Not Applicable:	2	0	0	2	
<b>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard (%)</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Repeat maltreatment	6.1 or less	8.6		X	
Maltreatment of children in foster care	.57 or less	.65		X	

#### STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 1

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- This outcome was substantially achieved in 81.3 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State did not meet the national standard for (1) the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period, or (2) the percentage of children maltreated in foster care.

The case reviews revealed inconsistent practices with respect to the timeliness of initiating a response to child maltreatment reports and establishing face-to-face contact with children and families. In most cases, workers did respond in a timely manner, however, in

38 percent of the applicable cases the response was not within State guidelines. In addition, delayed response was found for maltreatment reports classified as high risk, as well as those classified as low and moderate risk. Most stakeholders interviewed regarding this indicator, however, expressed the opinion that the Cabinet generally responds to maltreatment reports in a timely manner.

Although the case reviews did not identify extensive repeat maltreatment as defined by the item (item 2), there were several cases in which an allegation of maltreatment was reported to the caseworker on an open case and the caseworker did not formally report the allegation or investigate it. The fact that maltreatment reports on open cases are not formally reported appears to be consistent with Cabinet policy as described in the *Standards of Practice and Information Sources relevant to the Child and Family Services Review*. This document notes that: “If a new referral is received after the case has been opened for ongoing services, the worker shall conduct a new Continuous Quality Assessment to re-evaluate risk and safety factors.” Because maltreatment allegations on open cases usually are not formally investigated and are not entered into the State’s management information system, they would not be included in the calculation of repeat maltreatment. This raises questions regarding the actual incidence of maltreatment recurrence in the State.

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Safety Outcome 1 are presented below.

### **Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength                        X   Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 21 of the 50 cases. Twenty-nine cases were not applicable because they did not involve reports of child maltreatment during the period under review. In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with the State child welfare agency requirements. In Kentucky, the time frame for initiating investigations is determined by the level of risk assigned to the report. The Cabinet requires a response within 1 hour to all reports assessed as “High (Imminent) Risk.” Responses to reports assessed as “Moderate Risk” are to be initiated within 24 hours, and responses to reports classified as “Low Risk” are to be initiated within 48 hours. The results of the case review assessments were the following:

- Item 1 was rated as a Strength in 13 (62%) of the 21 applicable cases (5 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 1 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (38%) of the 21 applicable cases (none of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength in all cases in which the initiation of responses to child maltreatment reports occurring during the period under review was in accordance with State agency requirements for the risk classification assigned to the report. The item was



more likely to be rated as a Strength in Knox County (86% of cases) than in Warren County (25% of cases) or in Jefferson County (60% of cases).

For the eight cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, the investigation was not initiated within required guidelines in seven cases, and the time frame for establishing face-to-face contact did not meet agency guidelines in two cases. Two of the 8 cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement involved high risk reports that required a 1-hour response. In one of these cases, the investigation did not begin until 24 hours after the report was received; in the other case, the investigation was not initiated until 4 days after the report was received. There also were considerable delays in initiating investigations of the six cases rated as Area Needing Improvement that were classified as low or moderate risk.

In contrast to the case review findings, the majority of stakeholders commenting on this item expressed the opinion that the Cabinet generally responds to maltreatment reports in a timely manner.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 1 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 38 percent of the applicable cases, the agency had not initiated an investigation of a maltreatment report in a timely manner. According to the Statewide Assessment, the State implemented a differential approach to response to maltreatment in June 2001. Under this approach, reports of child maltreatment that do not require investigation are assigned to Families In Need of Services (FINS) rather than an investigative track. However, none of the cases reviewed for the CFSR were assigned to FINS.

## **Item 2. Repeat maltreatment**

\_\_\_\_ Strength                        X   Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 47 of the 50 cases. Three cases were not applicable for assessment because there were no substantiated maltreatment reports during the life of the case. Two of these cases involved voluntary placements at the request of primary caretakers, and one case was opened for services in response to problems arising from a divorce and custody dispute. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether there had been at least one substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review, and if so, whether another substantiated or indicated report occurred within 6 months of that report. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 46 (98%) of the 47 applicable cases (25 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 2 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 1 (2%) of the 47 applicable cases (which was a foster care case).

Item 2 was rated as a Strength in 46 cases because there was no repeat maltreatment as defined by the indicator. However, in 30 of these cases, there were no substantiated maltreatment reports during the period under review. In 24 of these 30 cases, the child was in foster care during the entire period under review or had exited foster care to adoption or independent living.

There were 17 cases in which there was at least one substantiated maltreatment report during the period under review. One of these cases was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because there were two substantiated reports within a 6-month period. In two additional cases, there were two substantiated reports during the period under review, but they were more than 6 months apart and therefore, the item was rated as a Strength.

Case reviews revealed that in 4 of the 22 in-home services cases, there were reports of repeat maltreatment within the period under review that were known to caseworkers but not investigated. This raises concerns about the actual incidence of maltreatment recurrence.

Additional findings with respect to the frequency of maltreatment reports for the 47 applicable cases were the following:

- In 5 cases, there was only 1 maltreatment report over the life of the case.
- In 21 cases, there were between 2 and 5 maltreatment reports over the life of the case.
- In 11 cases, there were between 6 and 10 maltreatment reports over the life of the case.
- In 10 cases, there were more than 10 maltreatment reports over the life of the case, with one case having 24 reports.

It is not known how many of these reports were substantiated.

Several stakeholders commenting on the issue of repeat maltreatment reported that the Cabinet is able to prevent repeat maltreatment through the use of the Continuous Quality Assessment (CQA) tool, which was described as a useful process for assessing safety and risk. According to stakeholders, the CQA focuses on assessing the family from a holistic perspective rather than focusing on the specific incident. However, other stakeholders expressed the opinion that even with the CQA, many workers are still “incident-based” in their assessments and do not know how to use CQA assessment results and evaluate risk that is not directly related to the maltreatment incident. Stakeholders reported that the Cabinet is in the process of improving the CQA by assessing the validity and reliability of the current “anchors” that are used to determine the level of risk of child maltreatment. Stakeholders suggested that the new revisions to the CQA will improve the ability of caseworkers to accurately assess risk of harm.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 2 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although in 98 percent of the 47 applicable cases, this item was rated as a Strength, the State's rate of repeat maltreatment for the year 2001 reported in the State data profile (8.6%) did not meet the national standard of 6.1 percent or less. The criteria and standards for both indicators must be met for this item to be rated as a Strength.

Information in the Statewide Assessment regarding repeat maltreatment is consistent with opinions voiced by some stakeholders regarding the risk assessment process. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, one of the factors that may contribute to repeat maltreatment is the worker’s “under assessment” of families. At times, issues of substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health are not being accurately assessed and families are not provided with sufficient services to address these issues. Information in the Statewide Assessment indicates additional factors that may contribute to maltreatment recurrence, including gaps in service delivery when cases are transferred and inadequate aftercare planning in some instances. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the incidence of repeat maltreatment reported in the State Data Profile may be due in part to data errors in the State’s reporting system in which the same report is counted twice.

Despite these concerns, the Statewide Assessment reports that there are a number of practices and programs in place designed to reduce the recurrence of maltreatment. This includes the CQA, the provision of wraparound services through family-team conferencing, the Targeted Assessment Project (TAP), and the Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse Linkage Project.

## **Safety Outcome 2**

<b>Safety Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jefferson</b>	<b>Knox</b>	<b>Warren</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	21	9	13	43	86.0
Partially Achieved:	2	0	1	3	6.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	3	0	4	8.0
Not Applicable:	0	0	0	0	

## **STATUS OF SAFETY OUTCOME 2**

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that this outcome was substantially achieved in 86.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.

Although Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity on this outcome, in a large percentage of cases reviewed during the CFSR, reviewers determined that the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to children in their own homes and to ensure that the risk of harm to children was adequately addressed. Stakeholders also reported that there are a variety of services available to ensure the protection of children while they remain in their own homes.

The case reviews, however, also identified concerns in some of the in-home services cases regarding management of risk of harm. These concerns pertained primarily to the lack of formal investigation of maltreatment allegations or follow-through on subsequent abuse/neglect allegations. In four cases, both the case files and the caseworkers indicated that an alleged maltreatment had apparently occurred while the case was open, yet nothing had been done to address the risk of harm to the children posed by this new incident. In two of these cases, the allegations were quite serious.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Safety Outcome 2 are presented and discussed below.

### **Item 3. Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal**

☐ Strength      ☒ Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** There were 27 cases for which an assessment of item 3 was applicable. Twenty-three cases were excluded from this assessment because the children were in foster care for the entire review period or because there were no substantiated or indicated maltreatment reports or identified risks of harm to the children in the home during the period under review. For this item, reviewers assessed whether, in responding to a substantiated maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent removal of children from their homes while at the same time ensuring their safety. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 3 was rated as a Strength in 22 (81%) of the 27 applicable cases (5 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 3 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (19%) of the 27 applicable cases (1 of which was a foster care case).

In four cases, a rating of Strength was assigned for this item when reviewers determined that children were removed from their homes without services but that the removal was necessary to ensure the children's safety. Eighteen cases were rated as a Strength for this item primarily because reviewers determined that the Cabinet had assessed the family's service needs appropriately and provided or referred the family for services to meet those needs. The services provided included, but were not limited to, anger management, parenting education, substance abuse treatment and assessment, mental health treatment, domestic violence counseling, day care,

financial assistance, family preservation, counseling for children, health care, housing referrals, educational assessments, and employment-related services.

Cases received a rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined that services were not provided (2 cases), the services provided were not sufficient to address the families' needs (2 cases), or the assessment of the family's service needs was incomplete (e.g., not all children were included in the assessment and all potential risk factors were not addressed) (1 case).

Most stakeholders commenting on this item indicated that there is a large array of services available in the State to prevent children's removal from their homes and the re-entry of children into foster care. Specific services cited as particularly effective in keeping families together were the family preservation programs, the Family-to-Family program, facilitated staffing, and family group conferencing. However, a few stakeholders expressed concern that recent budget cuts may impact the availability of services, particularly mental health services.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 19 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to maintain children safely in their own homes. The key concern identified was an inconsistency on the part of workers with respect to ensuring that all of a family's service needs are met.

Information from the Statewide Assessment and the stakeholder interviews suggest that for the most part the services needed to maintain families and prevent placement are available throughout the State and that the Cabinet makes concerted efforts to maintain children in their homes as long as their safety can be assured. The Statewide Assessment notes that data collected from July 2001 through March 2002 demonstrate that of the 1091 children at risk of placement served by the Family Preservation Program, 97 percent remained safely in the home at the time that services ended, and 92 percent were in the home 12 months after services ended.

#### **Item 4. Risk of harm to child**

  X   Strength           Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** An assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 50 cases. In assessing item 4, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 4 was rated as a Strength in 44 (88%) of the 50 applicable cases (28 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 4 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (12%) of the 50 applicable cases (none of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by removing the children from home and providing services to the parents to reduce risk of harm (10 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately addressed by removing the children from the home and seeking termination of parental rights (TPR) either prior to or during the period under review (22 cases).
- The risk of harm to children was appropriately managed by providing services to families to address risk concerns while the children remain in the home (12 cases).

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined the following:

- Services were not fully assessed and/or services were insufficient to reduce risk of harm (2 cases).
- There were new incidents of abuse or neglect that were reported to the worker but the worker did not take the necessary steps to ensure that there was an investigation of the new allegations and to address the continued risk to the child (4 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this item expressed differing opinions depending on their locations. Most of the stakeholders in Jefferson County expressed the opinion that the CQA is effective in managing risk of harm to children. As they noted, the CQA is useful in assessing needs and services and level of risk and can assist the worker in determining what is needed for a specific family in order to manage the risk of harm to children. However, a few stakeholders in this county also noted that many in-home services cases are closed before risk of harm has been adequately addressed because caseworkers are under pressure to close cases as soon as possible. Stakeholders in Knox County did not comment on the CQA, but expressed concern that risk of harm to children is not always effectively addressed because the court in that county returns children to their homes before the family is ready, often against the caseworker's recommendation. State-level stakeholders primarily expressed concern that risk of harm to children may not be adequately addressed in all cases because caseworkers tend to continue to be more incident-focused than family-focused in their assessments, despite the CQA. They noted that this has resulted in Kentucky instituting a team consultation process to ensure a more comprehensive assessment process. Stakeholders also reported that the Cabinet is working on revising the CQA to help workers more adequately assess risk.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 88 percent of the applicable cases reviewers determined that the Cabinet made diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children. The key concern identified in the case reviews pertained to a lack of investigations or follow-through on new reports or allegations of maltreatment on open cases.

Information from the Statewide Assessment and from a few stakeholders indicates that primary risks of harm to children in the State can be traced to the problems of substance abuse and domestic violence. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, awareness of these

problems led to the development of the Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse Linkage Project and the Targeted Assessment Project, which addresses mental health issues as well. The Statewide Assessment suggested that these initiatives will improve the Cabinet's effectiveness in managing risk of harm to children.

## II. PERMANENCY

### Permanency Outcome 1

<b>Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jefferson</b>	<b>Knox</b>	<b>Warren</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	1	1	0	2	7.1
Partially Achieved:	12	4	7	23	82.1
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	1	1	3	10.7
Not Applicable:	10	6	6	22	
<b>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard (%)</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Foster care re-entries	8.6 or less	10.8		X	
Length of time to achieve reunification	76.2 or more	82.5	X		
Length of time to achieve adoption	32.0 or more	15.9		X	
Stability of foster care placements	86.7 or more	80.3		X	

### STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME P1

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 7.1 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for an overall rating of substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicated that for Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2001, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the rate of foster care re-entries, (2) the percentage of children discharged to finalized adoptions within 24 months of entry into foster care, and (3) the percentage of children in foster care for 12 months or less who experienced no more than 2 placements.

The State did meet the national standard for the percentage of children in FFY 2001 who were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care.

In general, the CFSR found that the Cabinet was not consistently effective in ensuring that children have permanency and stability in their living situations. Five of the six items assessed for this outcome were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. The exception was item 10 – Permanency Goal of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. One key concern identified by case reviewers pertained to the finding that children tend to remain in foster care for many years without attaining permanency. Case reviewers determined that the Cabinet had not established appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner for 50 percent of the children in the foster care cases. Although some stakeholders noted improvements in expediting adoptions as a result of the implementation of new initiatives, case review findings, stakeholders and the Statewide Assessment reported that there continue to be delays in the adoption process (including delays in changing the goal to adoption, finding adoptive homes, and seeking and obtaining termination of parental rights) due to a variety of agency, court, and institutional factors.

Another identified concern pertained to the finding that children in foster care tend to experience placement instability. Information obtained from the Statewide Assessment and from stakeholder interviews indicates that children are not being carefully matched with care providers at the time of placement into foster care or when a placement change is necessary. This is either because the appropriate assessments are not being conducted, or assessments are being conducted but, because of a lack of sufficient placement resources, placement decisions are made on the basis of what is available rather than what is needed.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Permanency Outcome 1 are presented below.

#### **Item 5. Foster care re-entries**

       Strength        X   Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Three of the 28 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of foster care re-entries because they involved children who entered foster care at some time during the period under review. In assessing this item, reviewers determined whether the entry into foster care during the period under review occurred within 12 months of discharge from a prior foster care episode. The results of this assessment were that the item was rated as a Strength in all three cases.



An additional finding was that 5 of the 28 children in the foster care cases had experienced more than 1 foster care entry during the life of the case, although none of these cases met the criteria established for rating the item as an Area Needing Improvement. One of these children had experienced five entries into foster care.

Stakeholders commenting on this item provided several explanations for why children or youth might re-enter foster care. Several stakeholders suggested that disrupted placements with relatives contribute to the rate of re-entry into foster care. Other stakeholders attributed re-entries into foster care to the parents' relapse of substance abuse, to premature reunifications, and to the failure to provide sufficient services to families after reunification.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Despite the finding that no cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, data from the State Data Profile indicate that Kentucky's re-entry rate for FFY 2001 (10.8%) does not meet the national standard of 8.6 percent or less. It is necessary that the criteria and standards for both the case review and the statewide data measures be met for the item to receive an overall rating of Strength.

Information from the Statewide Assessment is consistent with stakeholders' comments regarding factors that contribute to re-entries into foster care. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the key factors contributing to foster care re-entry include inadequate aftercare planning and services, underlying needs that are not properly assessed or addressed, and court systems that reunify children too quickly or take questionable risks with relatives.

#### **Item 6. Stability of foster care placement**

\_\_\_\_ Strength        X   Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** All 28 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of Item 6. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement settings during the period under review and, if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal or meet the child's service needs. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 6 was rated as a Strength in 19 (68%) of the 28 applicable cases.
- Item 6 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 9 (32%) of the 28 applicable cases.

Additional findings of the case review were the following:

- Children in 12 cases experienced only 1 placement during the period under review.

- Children in 6 cases experienced 2 placements during the period under review.
- Children in 10 cases experienced 3 or more placements during the period under review. In one case there were 8 placement changes during the period under review.

Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the child did not experience a placement change during the period under review (11 cases), or that the placement changes experienced were in the child's best interest (e.g., moving to a pre-adoptive home) (8 cases).

A rating of Area Needing Improvement for this item was assigned to eight cases when reviewers determined that placement changes resulted from one or more of the following: (1) an inadequate assessment of children's placement needs, (2) a lack of services to support placements in foster homes when problems were encountered, (3) a scarcity of appropriate placement facilities, and (4) placement of children in an inappropriate setting (e.g., placement in a detention center for a child who was not adjudicated as a delinquent). One case was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that the current placement was not stable.

Stakeholders commenting on this topic generally agreed that children in foster care in the State do not have placement stability. Some stakeholders expressed the opinion that the Cabinet is making efforts to address this problem. As several stakeholders noted, the use of emergency shelter placements has decreased and the State has instituted foster parent support groups, foster parent mentoring programs, and foster care teams to support foster parents who are caring for children with multiple needs or behavioral challenges.

Several stakeholders attributed placement instability to the fact that placements often are not based on accurate assessments of children's needs, either because these assessments are not conducted or because there is a lack of adequate placement resources so that placement decisions are based on what is available rather than on what is appropriate. According to many stakeholders, placement instability also occurs because of insufficient communication between the agency and foster parents and because caseworkers do not provide foster parents with accurate or complete information about the children prior to placement in their homes. Concern was expressed by a few stakeholders about the quality of group placement resources and foster family homes. A few stakeholders noted that placement instability is most common for older children in foster care.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 6 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

- In 32 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that children experienced multiple placement changes that did not promote attainment of their goals or their treatment needs.
- Data from the State Data Profile for FFY 2001 indicate that the percentage of children experiencing no more than 2 placements in their first 12 months in foster care (80.3%) does not meet the national standard of 86.7 percent or more.

A key finding of the review was that even when assessments indicated that children had special placement needs, children were not placed in appropriate settings, usually due to a scarcity of placement resources.

Information from the Statewide Assessment notes that in case reviews conducted by the State, placement stability was a strength in 85 percent of cases and that the Citizen's Foster Care Review Board reported that in 2002, 17 percent of children who changed placements did so because of placement problems and that most placement changes occurred among children age 12 and older. Other information from the Statewide Assessment attributes placement instability to incomplete child assessments, improper placement matches, and insufficient services to support foster parents.

#### **Item 7. Permanency goal for child**

\_\_\_\_ Strength        X   Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** All 28 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 7. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 7 was rated Strength in 14 (50%) of the 28 applicable cases.
- Item 7 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 14 (50%) of the 28 applicable cases.

The case review found that the children in the 28 foster care cases had the following permanency goals:

- 17 children had a goal of adoption.
- 7 children had a goal of "long-term foster care" leading to eventual emancipation to independent living.
- 3 children had a goal of reunification.
- 1 child had a goal of permanent placement with relatives.

At the time of the on-site review, 22 of the 28 children in the foster care cases had been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. TPR had been filed and attained in 18 of the 22 cases. For the four cases for which TPR had not been filed (despite the 15-month criterion being met), a reason for not filing was noted in only one of the case files (i.e., in three cases no reasons for not filing were in the case files).

Fourteen cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the child's permanency goal was appropriate and had been established in a timely manner. For 10 of these cases, the most recent goal was adoption and this goal had

been established within 18 months or less of the time of the child's entry into foster care. TPR had been attained for the children in all 10 of these cases.

Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the most recent goal was inappropriate (3 cases), or that the most recent goal was appropriate but the agency had not established the goal or had not pursued TPR in a timely manner (11 cases). In 6 of the cases assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement, the children's goal was long-term foster care/emancipation, and the children had been in foster care from 5 to 10 years before that goal was established. For five of these cases, the prior goal was adoption and TPR had been attained. Reviewers determined that greater efforts could have been made to find adoptive homes for these children.

Stakeholders commenting on this item generated a variety of opinions related to permanency planning. Several stakeholders expressed the opinion that permanency planning has improved because concurrent planning is a common practice across the State. However, it was noted that caseworkers tend to define concurrent planning as the placement of a child in a foster/adopt home, and do not implement any other practice components of this approach. Some stakeholders also noted that the Cabinet makes concerted efforts to find adoptive homes for older children and does not automatically assume that because a child is older, adoption is not a feasible goal. Several stakeholders reported that the State and counties have established continuous case progress assessment systems and that significant efforts have been made to reduce delays in permanency.

Despite these positive perspectives, several stakeholders expressed the opinion that there are delays in establishing permanency goals in a timely manner. This was attributed in part to the reluctance of the courts and attorneys to pursue permanency goals other than reunification, particularly when TPR is necessary.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 7 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 50 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not established an appropriate goal for the child in a timely manner. Although stakeholders mentioned the use of concurrent planning to expedite permanency, the Statewide Assessment notes the need for more training and implementation of concurrent planning processes. In addition, information from the Statewide Assessment is consistent with stakeholders' perceptions that some courts are reluctant to change a child's permanency goal from reunification or to grant permanent custody to relatives.

#### **Item 8. Reunification, Guardianship, or Permanent Placement with Relatives**

\_\_\_\_ Strength        X   Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Item 8 was applicable for 4 of the 28 foster care cases. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had achieved the goals of reunification or permanent placement with relatives for the children in a timely manner or, if the goals had not been achieved in a timely manner, whether the agency had made, or was in the process of making, diligent efforts to achieve the goals. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 8 was rated as a Strength in 2 (50%) of the 4 applicable cases.
- Item 8 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (50%) of the 4 applicable cases.

The cases assessed for item 8 included three with a goal of reunification and one with a goal of permanent placement with relatives. Review findings with respect to these goals were the following:

- For the 3 cases with a goal of reunification, the goal was achieved in 2 cases, and in both of those cases, the goal was achieved within 12 months. In the third case in which the goal had not been achieved, the child had been in foster care for more than 12 months.
- For the 1 case in which the goal was permanent placement with relatives, the goal was not yet achieved and the child had been in foster care for more than 12 months.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that the goal had been achieved in a timely manner. The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency had not made adequate efforts to achieve the goal of reunification or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue were in general agreement that the Cabinet makes diligent efforts to promote family reunification. Several stakeholders noted that family preservation services are used to achieve reunification. In one county, however, stakeholders reported that the high cost of family preservation services often means that they are not routinely used for reunification purposes. A few stakeholders said that the fact that foster parents often work closely with biological parents tends to facilitate reunification.

**Determination and Discussion:** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement. Although data from the State Data Profile indicate that for FFY 2001, the percentage of reunifications occurring within 12 months of entry into foster care (82.5%) meets the national standard of 76.2 percent or more, in 50 percent of applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to attain the goals of reunification or permanent placement with relatives in a timely manner. It is necessary for the criteria for both measures to be met for this item to be rated as a Strength.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there are several initiatives implemented in the State that help expedite reunification, including Family Group Decision Making, the Family to Family initiative, Comprehensive Family Services (CFS), and Comprehensive Assessment and Training Services (CATS), which is a comprehensive family assessment of child attachment issues.

### Item 9: Adoption

\_\_\_\_ Strength        X   Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Seventeen of the foster care cases were assessed for item 9. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether diligent efforts had been, or were being, made to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. The results were that the item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in all 17 cases.

Of the 17 cases with a goal of adoption, adoption was finalized in 8 cases; however none of these finalizations took place within 24 months of the child's entry into foster care. Of the nine children who were in foster care at the end of the period under review and who had a permanency goal of adoption, three were in adoptive placements. These 9 children had been in foster care for time periods ranging from just over 2 years to almost 7 years.

This item was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the State had not made diligent efforts to achieve finalized adoptions in a timely manner. Identified agency-related delays included a failure to negotiate adoption subsidies, lack of concurrent planning, lack of caseworker efforts to achieve the goal, delays in seeking pre-adoptive placements, delays in searching for fathers and other relatives, and an insufficient number of adoptive families. The case reviewers also noted that some adoptions were delayed because foster parents must hire their own attorneys and the adoption assistance fund is not being used to reimburse them. Identified court-related barriers included judges' general reluctance to grant termination of parental rights (TPR), delays in scheduling and completing TPRs, and the length of TPR appeals. Other identified barriers were delays in completing paperwork on the part of foster parents, disrupted adoptive placements, and children's behavior problems or special needs.

Stakeholders commenting on this topic were in general agreement that the Cabinet is making efforts to expedite finalized adoptions. Several stakeholders suggested that adoptions are being expedited by the use of foster/adopt homes and the Cabinet's encouragement of foster families to adopt the children in their care. Some stakeholders suggested that adoptions are occurring more quickly because when a goal is changed to adoption, recruitment of a family begins immediately rather than having to wait for TPR. Stakeholders also stated that a variety of programs have contributed to timely adoptions, such as the Swift Adoption Program and the Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP). Stakeholders in one county said that there is a special adoption committee that meets monthly.

Despite these efforts, most stakeholders acknowledged that there often are significant delays in adoption finalizations. For the most part, stakeholders attributed delays to the courts, particularly court continuances for TPR and TPR appeals, and the reluctance of many judges to grant TPR. Stakeholders noted that granting TPR can take up to 1 year and TPR appeals can take an additional 2 years to complete.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the following:

- In 100% of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the Cabinet had not made diligent efforts to achieve adoptions in a timely manner.
- Data from the State Data Profile indicate that the State's percentage of finalized adoptions in FFY 2001 that occurred within 24 months of removal from home (15.9%) does not meet the national standard of 32.0 percent or more.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the percentage of cases achieving finalization within 24 months has declined from 23.7 percent in 2000 to 15.9 percent in 2001. The Statewide Assessment attributes delays in adoption finalization to the following:

- The frequency of staff turnover often causes delays or re-working of cases prepared for TPR.
- The available pool of adoptive families does not match the current population of children needing adoptive homes.
- Court-related issues.

Although the timeliness of adoptions has not improved, the Statewide Assessment notes that there have been increases in the number of finalized adoptions. This is attributed to a change in caseworkers' attitudes toward foster parent adoption. Of the 512 finalized adoptions in FY 2001, 78 percent were to foster parents. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the Cabinet has made efforts to increase adoptions through the development of adoption support networks, resource home mentors, the Comprehensive Assessment and Training Services (CATS), passage of the tuition waiver bill for children adopted from the foster care system as well as for children who were emancipated from the system, provision of adoption subsidies that are equal to foster care payments, and more specialized recruitment methods.

#### **Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement**

☒ X Strength      ☐ Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** Seven of the foster care cases were assessed for item 10. In assessing these cases, reviewers were to determine if the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to other planned permanent living arrangements. The results were that all 7 cases were rated as a Strength for this item.

This item was rated as a Strength because reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure that the goal, the services, and the living arrangement met each child's current needs. In one case, the child had severe behavior problems that were causing difficulties in the long-term placement and in providing the child with independent living services, which he refused to attend. However, case reviewers noted that the agency was doing everything possible to address these problems.

Stakeholders commenting on this item noted that the goal of long-term foster care must be established through a case planning process that involves the foster parent and the child and both must agree to the plan. Court approval and regional agency approval are required. Most stakeholders expressed the opinion that this plan is only established for children age 16 or older. Data from the case reviews are consistent with stakeholder comments in that all 7 children with this goal were age 16 or older at the time the goal was established. However, information from the case reviews also indicates that all of these children were age 12 or younger at the time of entry into foster care, and four of them were younger than age 10 at the time of entry.

Stakeholders were in general agreement that the Cabinet provides high quality independent living services. However, a few stakeholders indicated that these services are not available to children until they are age 16.

**Determination and Discussion:** This item was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 100 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to ensure permanency for children with regard to alternative living options. In contrast to stakeholder comments regarding independent living services, information in the Statewide Assessment indicates that independent living services are available to all youth age 12 and older, but are not always adequate.

## Permanency Outcome 2

<b>Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jefferson</b>	<b>Knox</b>	<b>Warren</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	8	6	6	20	71.4
Partially Achieved:	5	0	2	7	25.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	0	0	1	3.6
Not Applicable:	10	6	6	22	



## **STATUS OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME 2**

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 71.4 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

Although the CFSR found that the Cabinet was highly effective in placing children in foster care in close proximity to their families and communities, there were inconsistencies in practice with respect to placing siblings together, establishing frequent visitation between children and parents and siblings, maintaining children's connections to extended families and communities, and promoting positive relationships between parents and their children in foster care. While there were many cases for which reviewers determined that workers had made diligent efforts to accomplish these goals, there was a substantial number of cases where the necessary efforts were not evident.

Establishing frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings was identified as a particular concern during the CFSR. Forty percent of applicable cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this indicator because the frequency and quality of visitation were determined to be insufficient to meet the needs of children and families. In addition, less than half of the cases reviewed involved visitation patterns that were consistent with Cabinet policy requiring that children in foster care visit with their parents at least once every 2 weeks. The lack of sufficient contact between parents and children also was a basis for reviewers determining that in 40 percent of the applicable cases, the Cabinet had not made adequate efforts to promote the parent-child bond.

Stakeholders commenting on the items assessed for this outcome generally expressed positive opinions regarding the efforts of the Cabinet for all items. However, several stakeholders noted that there are barriers to frequent visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings. These barriers include lack of transportation and the fact that most visits must be supervised by Cabinet staff. Some State-level stakeholders noted that the Cabinet does not provide the necessary guidance to assist caseworkers in making decisions regarding appropriate visitation supervision.

The findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Permanency Outcome 2 are presented and discussed below.

### **Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement**

  X   Strength                             Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Of the 28 foster care cases, 13 were applicable for an assessment of item 11. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which (1) TPR had been attained prior to the period under review, (2) contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interest, and/or (3) parents were deceased or whereabouts were unknown. In assessing item 11, reviewers were to determine whether the child's most current foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. This assessment resulted in the item being rated as a Strength in all 13 (100%) applicable cases.

The cases were rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the child was placed in the same community or county as parents or relatives (5 cases), the placement in a different county was necessary to meet the child's needs (6 cases), the child was placed in an adjoining county that was close enough to promote parental visitation (1 case), or the child was placed out of county to be with siblings (1 case).

Most stakeholders commenting on this topic stated that children are generally placed within their communities. Stakeholders in Jefferson County noted that the Family-to-Family program is designed to ensure that children are placed in their home communities. However, in another county, stakeholders expressed concern that the scarcity of foster homes in the county affects the agency's ability to place children within the community.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 11 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 100 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the Cabinet made diligent efforts to ensure that children were placed in foster care placements that were in close proximity to their parents or relatives, or, if not in close proximity, were necessary to meet some special needs.

## **Item 12. Placement with siblings**

☐ Strength      ☒ Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** Nineteen of the 28 foster care cases involved a child with siblings who also were in foster care. In assessing item 12, reviewers were to determine whether siblings were, or had been, placed together and, if not, whether separation was necessary to meet the needs (service or safety needs) of one or more of the children. This assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 12 was rated as a Strength in 16 (84%) of the 19 applicable cases.
- Item 12 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 3 (16%) of the 19 applicable cases.

In 12 of the 19 applicable cases, the child was in a placement with at least one other sibling, and in 3 of these cases, the child was in a placement with all siblings. In the three cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item, reviewers determined that the agency had not made concerted efforts to ensure that a child was placed with his or her siblings.

Stakeholders commenting on this topic expressed the opinion that the Cabinet generally does a good job placing siblings together. However, some stakeholders reported that placement with siblings is limited by an insufficient number of foster families that can accommodate sibling groups.

**Determination and Discussion:** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 16 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the separation of siblings in foster care was unnecessary. This finding is not consistent with information in the Statewide Assessment indicating that State policy requires that siblings who have a relationship must be placed together unless it is determined more beneficial to them to be in separate placements.

### **Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_X\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 13 was applicable for 20 of the 28 foster care cases. Eight cases were not applicable for an assessment of this item because (1) TPR had already been established and parents were no longer involved in the children's lives, (2) there was a "no contact" order on the parents, (3) the parents' whereabouts were unknown although the agency had conducted a diligent search, and/or (4) the child had no siblings in foster care or contact with siblings was not recommended. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine (1) whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to facilitate visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings in foster care and (2) whether these visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of children and families. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 13 was rated as a Strength in 12 (60%) of the 20 applicable cases.
- Item 13 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (40%) of the 20 applicable cases.

Visitation with mothers was not applicable for assessment in 12 of the 20 cases because TPR had been attained and the mother was no longer involved in the children's lives. Typical visitation between children and their mothers for the eight cases for which this assessment was applicable was the following:

- Weekly visits - 1 case.
- Twice a month visits - 2 cases.

- Monthly visits – 2 cases.
- Less than monthly visits - 3 cases.

In two of the three cases in which visits with mother occurred less frequently than once a month, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

Visitation with fathers was not applicable for assessment in 15 cases due to a variety of reasons including prior TPR, deceased, identity unknown, whereabouts unknown (despite diligent search efforts), or visits between children and fathers were deemed to be not in the child's best interest. Typical visitation between children and their fathers for the five cases for which this assessment was applicable was the following:

- Weekly visits – 1 case.
- Twice a month visits - 1 case.
- Less than monthly visits – 1 case.
- No visits – 2 cases.

In one of the three cases in which visits with father occurred less frequently than once a month, reviewers determined that the agency had made concerted efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

Visitation between siblings was applicable in 14 cases in which siblings were not placed together in foster care. Typical visitation between siblings was the following:

- Weekly – 2 cases.
- Twice a month visits – 4 cases.
- Monthly visits - 1 case.
- Less than monthly visits - 2 cases.
- No visits – 5 cases.

In three of the seven cases in which sibling visits occurred less frequently than once a month, reviewers determined that the agency had made efforts to promote more frequent visitation. In four cases, reviewers determined that the agency did not make efforts to arrange visitation even when the children expressed an interest in visiting their siblings.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency of visitation met the needs of the child, or that, when visitation was less frequent than needed, the agency had made diligent efforts to promote more frequent visitation.

Eight cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers identified one or more of the following:

- Lack of effort to arrange sibling visitation (4 cases).
- Lack of effort to contact the father to involve him in visitation (3 cases).

- Lack of efforts to facilitate visits between a mother and a child (1 case).
- Absence of a visitation plan (1 case).
- Lack of efforts to promote visitation with grandparents, who were the primary caretakers prior to foster care placement (1 case).

Most stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the Cabinet makes concerted efforts to support visitation between children in foster care and their parents and siblings. Some stakeholders, however, described lack of transportation as a frequent barrier to visitation with parents and between siblings. Some State-level stakeholders noted that the Cabinet does not have guidance around visitation to assist workers with decisions on supervision. Most visits are supervised by Cabinet staff and that limits the frequency.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 13 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 40 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the Cabinet had not made concerted efforts to ensure that visitation was of sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the family. This finding is not consistent with information in the Statewide Assessment indicating that State policy requires that visits between children in foster care and their parents occur at least every 2 weeks. This frequency was evident in less than half of the applicable cases (for both fathers and mothers). The Statewide Assessment notes that in interviews with children leaving foster care, the children reported a need for more frequent visits with their parents and siblings.

#### **Item 14. Preserving connections**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_X\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** Item 14 was applicable for assessment in all 28 foster care cases. In assessing item 14, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made, or was making, diligent efforts to preserve the child's connections to neighborhood, community, heritage, family, faith, and friends while the child was in foster care. The assessment resulted in the following findings:

- Item 14 was rated as a Strength in 21 (75%) of the 28 applicable cases.
- Item 14 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 7 (25%) of the 28 applicable cases.

Reviewers indicated that in 21 of the 28 cases, children's primary connections had been “significantly” preserved while they were in foster care; in 2 of the 28 cases, children’s primary connections had been “partially” preserved, and in 5 of the 28 cases children’s primary connections were “not at all” preserved.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that critical primary connections were significantly preserved. For the most part, reviewers assigned the rating of Strength because connections were being maintained with extended family members.

Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined the following:

- Multiple changes in foster placements and/or the location of the placements made it difficult to maintain primary connections (4 cases).
- The agency was not assisting the child in remaining connected to extended family and/or friends (2 cases).
- The placement did not facilitate the child's ability to maintain connections to his racial heritage (1 case). The child is African American and is placed in a rural community where there are very few African Americans. The community is located 3 hours away from his home community.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the Cabinet encourages children to maintain connections to their communities, schools, and extended families. Some stakeholders noted that kinship care is used to keep children connected to their families. Stakeholders in Jefferson County reported that there is a collaboration among service providers that assists in preserving children's connections to their neighborhoods and schools.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 14 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 25 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to preserve children's connections.

### **Item 15. Relative placement**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_X\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** All 28 foster care cases were applicable for an assessment of item 15. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives (both maternal and paternal relatives) as potential placement resources for children in foster care. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 15 was rated as a Strength in 22 (79%) of the 28 applicable cases.
- Item 15 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 6 (21%) of the 28 applicable cases.

Cases were rated as a Strength for this item when reviewers determined that children were placed with relatives (3 cases), had been previously placed with relatives (7 cases), or were not placed with relatives but the agency had made diligent efforts to seek relatives and assess them as placement resources (12 cases).

This item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the Cabinet had not made diligent efforts to search for relatives as placement resources and reasons for not seeking relatives were not noted in the case file nor identified during case-related interviews. In three cases, reviewers determined that there was an inadequate search for both maternal and paternal relatives. In three cases, reviewers determined that the agency had searched for maternal relatives, but that the search for fathers and/or paternal relatives was not adequate.

Although some stakeholders commenting on this topic reported that the agency is effective in completing searches for relatives, others expressed the opinion that the agency is not effective in seeking relatives. Some stakeholders voiced concern about the lack of Cabinet oversight and support services when children are placed in kinship care and noted that relative placements often disrupt.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 21 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the agency had not made diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources. This finding is not consistent with information reported in the Statewide Assessment indicating that the Cabinet considers relatives a preferred placement option for children in out-of-home care. The Statewide Assessment also notes that the percentage of children residing in Relative Foster Family Care is increasing.

#### **Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents**

☐ Strength      ☒ Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** An assessment of item 16 was applicable for 10 of the 28 foster care cases. A case was considered not applicable for an assessment of this item if parental rights had been terminated and parents were no longer involved with the child or if a relationship with the parents was considered to be not in the child's best interests. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had made diligent efforts to support or maintain the bond between children in foster care and their mothers and fathers. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 16 was rated as a Strength in 6 (60%) of the 10 applicable cases.
- Item 16 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 4 (40%) of the 10 applicable cases.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that (1) there was a strong bond between the parent and the child that the agency supported, or (2) there was not a strong bond between the parent and the child, but the agency made concerted efforts to promote bonding. One example of efforts to promote bonding included encouraging contact between a parent and child even after TPR.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that the agency did not promote parental involvement with the child to strengthen the parent-child relationship. In three of the four cases rated Area Needing Improvement, reviewers determined that the Cabinet had not made sufficient efforts to search for the father or promote the father-child relationship.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that the agency makes efforts to promote parent-child relationships. They noted that parents are being involved in activities such as taking their children to the doctor and school activities. In addition, life books are created to ensure that children have pictures of their families.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 16 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because reviewers determined that in 40 percent of applicable cases, the agency had not made concerted efforts to support the parent-child relationships of children in foster care.

### III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

#### Well Being Outcome 1

<b>Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jefferson</b>	<b>Knox</b>	<b>Warren</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	16	8	8	32	64.0
Partially Achieved:	3	3	6	12	24.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	5	1	0	6	12.0
Not Applicable:	0	0	0	0	

#### STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1



Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved for 64.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

An overall CFSR finding was that the Cabinet is not consistent in its efforts to meet the service needs of children and families, with 32 percent of the cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item. The key problem pertained to the inadequacy of the assessments conducted in many of the cases, particularly the in-home services cases. In those cases in which assessments were not comprehensive, children and parents had service needs that were not addressed.

The CFSR also found inconsistencies in practice with regard to caseworker contacts with children and parents. For 22 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with children were not sufficient to ensure children's safety and promote their permanency and well-being. For 37 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of caseworker contacts with parents were not sufficient to meet the needs of the children and families. For both of these indicators, in-home services cases were more likely than foster care cases to be assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement.

Finally, the CFSR findings suggest that efforts to involve families in the case planning process are not consistently effective, with 28 percent of cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this indicator. A key concern pertains to the lack of involvement of fathers in the case planning process in several cases.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Well-Being Outcome 1 are presented and discussed below.

#### **Item 17. Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents**

☐ Strength      ☒ Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 17 was applicable for all 50 cases. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the agency had (1) adequately assessed the needs of children, parents, and foster parents; and (2) provided the services necessary to meet those needs. The results were the following:

- Item 17 was rated as a Strength in 34 (68%) of the 50 applicable cases (22 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 17 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 16 (32%) of the 50 applicable cases (6 of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the needs of children, parents, and foster parents had been adequately assessed and that identified service needs had been met. Services addressed a wide range of issues including, but not limited to domestic violence, poor school performance, chemical dependency, depression, poor home management, financial issues, child behavior problems, independent living, and mental health. Foster care cases were more likely to be rated a Strength for this item (79% of foster care cases) than were in-home services cases (45% of in-home services cases).

A rating of Area Needing Improvement was assigned when reviewers determined the following:

- There was inadequate assessment of the family's needs resulting in unmet needs for services (10 in-home cases and 2 foster care cases).
- The child's needs were not met (2 foster care cases).
- Services were not provided to the foster parents (1 foster care case).
- No attempts were made to contact the father (1 foster care case).

Stakeholders commenting on this topic expressed the opinion that the Cabinet is effective in assessing the service needs of families. Most stakeholders attributed this to the ongoing CQA that has become standard practice within the Cabinet. However, State-level stakeholders reported that there is inconsistency among regions of the State in terms of assessing families and providing comprehensive services. Stakeholders also noted that lack of transportation can be a barrier to participation in services.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 17 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 32 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the Cabinet had not adequately assessed and/or addressed the service needs of children and parents. Reviewers determined in all applicable cases that the needs of foster parents were adequately addressed. Only 6 (21%) of the 28 foster care cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item compared to 10 (45%) of the in-home services cases. This suggests that while meeting the service needs of children and families is problematic in some foster care cases, it appears to be a significant concern in cases in which children remain in their homes. In general, the key concern identified was that children and parents had service needs that were not identified by the caseworkers either because a comprehensive assessment was not done or because services were not provided in accordance with the findings of the CQA.

The case reviewers' determination that the service needs of foster parents were adequately addressed in all applicable cases is not consistent with information reported in the Statewide Assessment. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the State conducted a Customer Satisfaction Survey of foster and adoptive parents. The results of this survey demonstrated that only 70 percent of the foster/adoptive parents reported that they were provided sufficient resources to care for foster children.

## Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning

\_\_\_\_ Strength        X   Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 18 was applicable for 47 of the 50 cases. A case was considered not applicable for assessment of this item if TPR had been obtained on the parents prior to the period under review, there were no pre-adoptive parents or permanent caregivers, and/or the child was too young or impaired to participate in case planning. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether parents (including pre-adoptive parents or permanent caregivers) and children (if age-appropriate) had been involved in the case planning process, and if not, whether their involvement was contrary to the child's best interest. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent or child had actively participated in identifying the services and goals included in the case plan. This assessment produced the following findings:

- Item 18 was rated as a Strength in 34 (72%) of the 47 applicable cases (23 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 18 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 13 (28%) of the 47 applicable cases (2 of which were foster care cases).

In assessing this item, reviewers made the following determinations:

- Mothers were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 34 cases. In 4 cases, the mother was not involved but should have been. There were 12 cases in which the mother was not available to participate or mother's participation was contrary to the child's best interest.
- Fathers were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 15 cases. In 11 cases the father was not involved but should have been. There were 21 cases in which the father was not available to participate or the father's participation was considered to be contrary to the child's best interest. In 3 cases, reviewers could not tell if the father was involved in case planning.
- Children were appropriately involved in the case planning process in 33 cases. In 2 cases, children were not involved, although reviewers determined that they were old enough to have been involved. There were 15 cases in which reviewers determined that the children were not old enough or were too impaired to participate in the case planning process.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that all appropriate parties had actively participated in the case planning process. The item was more likely to be rated as a Strength in the applicable foster care cases (92% of foster care cases) than in the in-home services cases (50% of in-home services cases).

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- No attempts were made to locate fathers or to involve fathers in the case planning process (12 cases).
- Mothers were not involved in case planning (4 cases).
- Children who were deemed old enough to have been involved were not involved (4 cases).

During interviews with case reviewers, several parents noted that they had been shown the case plan and told what was in it, but that they did not have input into the content of the plan.

Several stakeholders commenting on this topic expressed the opinion that foster parents and adoptive parents are involved in case planning, but that parents are less frequently involved. However, several stakeholders noted that the Cabinet's facilitated staffing program (which is similar to family group decision making) promotes parent involvement in case planning, although it is not available to all families. Stakeholders in one county reported that involvement of fathers in case planning is a fairly rare occurrence, particularly if the father does not have legal custody of the children.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 18 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 28 percent of the cases, reviewers determined that the Cabinet had not made diligent efforts to involve parents and/or children in the case planning process. Lack of parent involvement in case planning was particularly evident in the in-home services cases.

The case review findings are consistent with information reported in the Statewide Assessment. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, State policy requires the involvement of parents in case planning through convening a Family Team Planning Conference. However, a mock review of cases conducted by the State revealed that only 52 percent of families were engaged in the case planning process.

#### **Item 19. Worker visits with child**

\_\_\_\_ Strength        X   Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** All 50 cases were applicable for an assessment of item 19. In conducting this assessment, reviewers were to determine whether the frequency of visits between the caseworkers and children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and whether visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. The results of the assessment were the following:

- Item 19 was rated as a Strength in 39 (78%) of the 50 applicable cases (25 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 19 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 11 (22%) of the 50 applicable cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of visits for the 28 foster care cases:

- In 3 cases, visits typically occurred once a week.

- In 4 cases, visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 18 cases, visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 3 cases, visits typically occurred less than monthly.

Reviewers noted the following with respect to frequency of visits for the 22 in-home services cases:

- In 2 cases, visits occurred once a week.
- In 1 case, visits typically occurred twice a month.
- In 15 cases, visits typically occurred once a month.
- In 4 cases, visits typically occurred less frequently than once a month.

Item 19 was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and children was sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well-being and promote attainment of case goals.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined one or more of the following:

- The frequency of caseworker visits was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child and the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (5 cases).
- The frequency of caseworker visits with children was not sufficient to meet the needs of the child (3 cases).
- The frequency of caseworker visits was sufficient, but the visits did not focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment (3 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this topic were not in agreement. About half of the stakeholders expressed the opinion that children are visited at least once a month by their caseworkers, which meets the State policy. However, the other half reported that caseworkers are not visiting children once a month, and attributed this to high caseloads and frequent turnover of workers. This suggests that, as one stakeholder noted, the frequency of visits varies depending on the workers. One stakeholder noted that in order to improve the frequency of contact, the Cabinet established an 800 number for foster parents to call if the child has not received a visit from their State worker as required or if they are concerned about the child's permanency plan.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 19 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 22 percent of the cases reviewers determined that caseworker visits with children were not of sufficient frequency and/or quality. Foster care cases were less likely to be rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item (11%) compared to in-home services cases (36%).

These findings are consistent with information in the Statewide Assessment. As noted in the Statewide Assessment, a CFSR mock review held in four regions revealed that there was monthly contact between worker and child in 72 percent of cases. Results from the Foster Care Census show that 81 percent of homes receive visits from any social worker at least once per month. In addition, a foster parent survey revealed that only 75 percent of foster parents believe children in their home receive quality visits from the case manager. The Statewide Assessment also notes that in exit interviews, children stated that they wanted more face-to-face visits with their workers.

#### **Item 20. Worker visits with parents**

☐ Strength      ☒ Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 20 was applicable for 41 of the 50 cases. There were nine foster care cases that were not applicable for this assessment because TPR had been attained for the parents and parents were no longer involved in the lives of the children. Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworker's face-to-face contact with the children's mothers and fathers was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote attainment of case goals and/or ensure the children's safety and well being. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 20 was rated as a Strength in 26 (63%) of the 41 cases (16 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 20 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 15 (37%) of the 41 cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

Typical patterns of caseworker visits with mothers were the following (35 applicable cases):

- Weekly visits - 1 case.
- Twice a month visits - 2 cases.
- Monthly visits - 23 cases.
- Less than monthly visits - 9 cases.

Typical patterns of caseworker visits with fathers were the following (32 applicable cases):

- Weekly visits - 2 cases.
- Twice a month visits - 1 case.
- Monthly visits - 13 cases.
- Less than monthly visits - 9 cases.
- No visits – 7 cases.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that visits occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of parents and children and that visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal attainment. The item was rated as a Strength in 84 percent of the applicable foster care cases compared to 55 percent of the in-home services cases.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that visits were not sufficiently frequent to meet the needs of parents and children (11 cases) or that visits were of sufficient frequency, but did not focus on substantive issues pertaining to the case (4 cases).

Stakeholders commenting on this topic were again divided in their opinions. While about half of the stakeholders suggested that workers maintained frequent contact with parents, the others expressed the opinion that contact with parents is less frequent than necessary, which was attributed to high caseloads and caseworker turnover.

***Determination and Discussion:*** This item was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement because in 37 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the frequency and/or quality of caseworker visits with parents were not sufficient to monitor the safety and well-being of the child or promote attainment of case goals.

These findings are consistent with information reported in the Statewide Assessment. According to the Statewide Assessment, mock reviews revealed that there was at least monthly contact with parents in only 53 percent of the cases and that fathers are rarely visited by caseworkers. Workers and family members sometimes reported during an interview that visits to families were of lower quality than desired. The Statewide Assessment also notes that visitation is affected by worker turnover, as well as time spent in training and performing management tasks (e.g., documentation in the State's information system).

## Well-Being Outcome 2

<b>Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jefferson</b>	<b>Knox</b>	<b>Warren</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	21	11	9	41	95.3
Partially Achieved:	0	0	1	1	2.3
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	0	0	1	2.3
Not Applicable:	2	1	4	7	

## STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2

Kentucky achieved substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2 based on the finding that 95.3 percent of the cases reviewed were found to have substantially achieved this outcome, which meets the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

The CFSR found that in a large percentage of cases, the Cabinet was effective in assessing children's educational needs and providing appropriate services to meet those needs. However, some children in the cases reviewed had multiple school changes due to foster care placements.

The findings for the item assessed for Well Being Outcome 2 are presented below.

### Item 21. Educational needs of the child

☒ Strength      ☐ Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 21 was applicable for 43 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for assessment were in-home services cases in which the children did not have needs pertaining to education-related issues. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether children's educational needs were appropriately assessed and whether services were provided to meet those needs. The results of this assessment were the following:

- Item 21 was rated as a Strength in 41 (95%) of the 43 applicable cases (27 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 21 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 2 (5%) of the 43 applicable cases (1 of which was a foster care case).

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that the agency had assessed the children's educational needs and had provided services to meet those needs (if necessary). The item was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when educational needs were not fully assessed (1 case), or identified needs were not addressed (1 case).

Reviewers reported the following additional findings with respect to this item:

- In 14 cases, children experienced multiple school changes as a result of changes in foster care placements.
- Educational services included advocacy, truancy prevention, special education, tutoring, specialized educational placement, and speech and occupational therapy.



Stakeholders commenting on this topic generally agreed that the Cabinet, foster parents and the schools collaborate to ensure that children's educational needs are met. In Jefferson County, stakeholders noted that the agency and the schools collaborate to limit the occurrence of school changes during the school year. However, in one county, stakeholders reported that the relationship among the Cabinet, the schools, and the foster parents is not always positive, which has a negative affect on meeting children's educational needs.

**Determination and Discussion:** Item 21 was assigned an overall rating of Strength because in 95 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the Cabinet had made diligent efforts to meet the educational needs of children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Child/Youth Development section of the CQA asks the worker to assess the educational needs for each child. Children in out-of-home care are provided an educational passport, which is to be delivered to their new school within 2 days. Data from the foster care census found that 40 percent of school-aged children had an IEP and 50 percent had an educational need. More than 90 percent of foster parents surveyed stated that children's educational needs are adequately assessed and addressed in the case planning process. The Children's Review Program exit interviews reported that 97 percent of the children interviewed said that their educational needs were met in their placement. In addition, the State provides college and vocational school tuition assistance for children who are in out-of-home care or who were adopted from the State foster care agency.

### Well-Being Outcome 3

<b>Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Jefferson</b>	<b>Knox</b>	<b>Warren</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	18	9	11	38	76.0
Partially Achieved:	4	1	2	7	14.0
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	2	1	5	10.0
Not Applicable:	0	0	0	0	

### STATUS OF WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3

Kentucky did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 76.0 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for a determination of substantial conformity.

In general, the CFSR found that the Cabinet was highly effective in meeting children's physical health needs, but was less consistent in its efforts to address children's mental health needs, particularly for children in the in-home services cases. Key concerns identified by stakeholders pertained to the scarcity of mental health services in some areas of the State, and the poor quality of some of the mental health services that are available.

Findings pertaining to the specific items assessed under Well-Being Outcome 3 are presented and discussed below.

#### Item 22. Physical health of the child

  X   Strength             Area Needing Improvement

**Review Findings:** An assessment of item 22 was applicable for 41 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable for this assessment were in-home services cases in which physical health concerns were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) children's physical health needs had been appropriately assessed, and (2) the services designed to meet those needs had been, or were being, provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 22 was rated as a Strength in 36 (88%) of the 41 applicable cases (26 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 22 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 5 (12%) of the 41 applicable cases (2 of which were foster care cases).

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers determined that children's health needs were routinely assessed and services provided as needed.

Cases were rated as an Area Needing Improvement for this item when reviewers determined the following:

- There was no evidence that preventive health and dental care services had been provided (1 foster care case and 2 in-home cases).

- There was no initial health screening and foster parents did not receive a medical passport (1 foster care case).
- There was no physical examination after an allegation of sexual abuse (1 in-home case).

Stakeholders commenting on this topic indicated that the agency is effective in meeting the physical health needs of children and that children in foster care receive needed medical exams and services. However, stakeholders reported that dental services are not consistently available; in one county, the only orthodontist who will accept Medicaid is in another county and some foster parents must travel over 90 miles to access his services.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 22 was assigned an overall rating of Strength based on the finding that in 88 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the Cabinet was adequately addressing the health needs of children in foster care and in-home services cases. In the cases reviewed, medical and dental services were accessible and services were provided. Stakeholders, however, noted that dental services are not consistently available throughout the State.

According to the Statewide Assessment, medical, dental, and visual screenings should be completed within 2 weeks for children entering out-of-home care and then every 12 months thereafter. The Cabinet employs a part-time doctor and two full-time registered nurses who are available for telephone consultation with foster parents and participate in the health planning for medically fragile children. The Foster Care Census revealed that 91 percent of children in Cabinet foster homes have received a physical examination within the past 12 months and 83 percent of children received dental services in the past 12 months. However, a review of cases by the State found that only 62 percent of cases received adequate dental care. In the Foster Care Census conducted by the State, 12 percent of foster parents indicated difficulty in finding dental providers.

### **Item 23. Mental health of the child**

☐ Strength      ☒ Area Needing Improvement

***Review Findings:*** An assessment of item 23 was applicable for 42 of the 50 cases reviewed. Cases that were not applicable were foster care cases in which the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs and in-home services cases in which the children's mental health needs were not an issue. In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether (1) mental health needs had been appropriately assessed and (2) appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. The findings of this assessment were the following:

- Item 23 was rated as a Strength in 34 (81%) of the 42 applicable cases (24 of which were foster care cases).
- Item 23 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement in 8 (19%) of the 42 applicable cases (3 of which were foster care cases).

For the 42 applicable cases, reviewers noted that children's mental health needs were "significantly assessed" in 35 cases, "partially assessed" in 3 cases, "not at all assessed" in 3 cases, and "not applicable" in 1 case. Reviewers also reported that mental health service needs were "significantly met" in 32 cases, "partially met" in 4 cases, and "not at all" met in 2 cases. In four cases, the mental health assessment resulted in a finding that services were not needed.

This item was rated as a Strength when reviewers noted that mental health needs were "significantly" assessed and the children's mental health needs were "significantly" met. The item was rated as a Strength 89 percent of the applicable foster care cases compared to 67 percent of the applicable in-home services cases.

The item was rated as an Area Needing Improvement when reviewers determined that assessments and services were provided only partially or not at all. A key finding was that the Cabinet was not consistent in ensuring that children exposed to domestic violence, maltreatment, or other potentially traumatic events received mental health assessments or services.

Stakeholders commenting on this topic were in general agreement that the Cabinet is usually effective in meeting children's mental health needs. However, several stakeholders described barriers to mental health services including the lack of these services in rural areas, the high turnover among therapists, and the questionable quality of some of the services that are available.

***Determination and Discussion:*** Item 23 was assigned an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement based on the finding that in 19 percent of the applicable cases, reviewers determined that the Cabinet had not made concerted efforts to address the mental health needs of children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Peer Review database shows that 80 percent of the children in out-of-home care were assessed for mental health needs and provided needed services. In the Foster Parent Census, foster parents reported that 90 percent of children in their care, who had assessed mental health needs, had those needs met through services. The Statewide Assessment also notes that there is a need for better coordination of mental health services for those youth aging out of foster care. Services for children with mental retardation, particularly those with co-existing mental health and behavioral problems, are limited.

## SECTION 2: SYSTEMIC FACTORS

### I. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

#### STATUS OF STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Kentucky is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. Findings for the item assessed for this factor are presented below.

**Item 24. State is operating a Statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.**

  X   Strength                             Area Needing Improvement

Item 24 is rated as a Strength because information on the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals for the placement of every child in foster care is readily retrievable from the State's data system.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Kentucky's statewide information system, The Worker's Information System (TWIST), meets SACWIS requirements. For each child in out-of-home or Kinship Care, TWIST collects demographic data, a placement log, case planning information and placement provider information. The system generates "ticklers" to remind case workers to update or complete information. TWIST also generates a variety of management reports used by case workers and supervisors as well as central office staff. It is accessible to staff 24 hours a day. Every Cabinet worker has a workstation, and the Help Desk provides support for use of TWIST.

Stakeholders commenting on this item were in general agreement that TWIST is an effective information system that can identify the status, demographic characteristics, locations, and goals for children in foster care. In addition, TWIST tracks medical, financial, and social history data, as well as home visits and other contacts. Stakeholders noted that the system can be accessed from anywhere in the State. Stakeholders also reported that TWIST generates reports that are useful, timely, and comprehensive and can be used to create action plans, monitor outcomes, and measure staff accountability.

Despite the mostly positive perceptions of TWIST, a few stakeholders suggested that there are gaps in the system. They noted that TWIST is not able to track sibling visits, adoption issues, or compelling reasons for not filing TPR. Stakeholders also noted that although the system can track children on runaway status, some caseworkers do not enter this information.

## II. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2X	3	4

### STATUS OF CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Kentucky is not in substantial conformity with the factor of the Case Review System. Findings for each specific item assessed for this factor are presented below.

**Item 25. Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength        X   Area Needing Improvement

Item 25 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because there is a lack of consistency in actively involving parents and children in the case planning process.

According to the Statewide Assessment, a case plan is prepared for every child in foster care. Within 5 days of removal, the initial case planning conference is convened. During this conference, the family case plan, youth action case plan, and the visitation agreement are developed jointly with the parents, children, agency staff and others applicable to the case. Within 30 days, the case plan is finalized with a supervisory review.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, caseworkers are required to engage families in the case planning process through the Family Solutions model. The model is designed to engage families in problem solving. The casework model assesses a family's strengths and needs and identifies family- and individual-level objectives to improve the safety and well-being of the family. Caseworkers also are required to engage the family, community partners, and other significant individuals in a Family Team Meeting to discuss how individual and family strengths, resources, and supports can be accessed to prevent future maltreatment.

The Statewide Assessment reported that mock case reviews (conducted during the Statewide Assessment process) found that 52 percent of cases reviewed demonstrated engagement with the family. The reviews found that mothers were engaged in case planning in 85 percent of all cases (in-home and out-of-home), fathers were engaged in case planning in 47 percent of all cases, and children were engaged in case planning in 65 percent of the cases. These findings are consistent with the results of the case reviews conducted for the CFSR.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that all 16 of the State's Service Regions received an overall positive rating from the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services (COA). The COA stated that review of records indicated that minors were often involved in service planning, but their participation was not always sufficient to ensure consistent input. They also reported that although parents were invited to attend, more active attempts are needed to include families in the process.

Focus groups conducted as preparation for the Statewide Assessment identified some practices that might improve client involvement in the case planning process, including providing a layout of the plan in the State's automated system (TWIST), and providing additional training for workers in family engagement.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that children in foster care have case plans and that parents, children over age 8, foster parents, service providers, and other relevant parties usually are invited to case planning meetings. Several stakeholders reported that the input of relevant parties is used in the development of case plans, although it was not clear that this included parents and children. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that agency practices such as Family Group Decision Making and facilitated staffing promote family involvement in case planning, but that these practices need to be expanded to include more families.

**Item 26. Provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review.**

☒ X Strength                      ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 26 is rated as a Strength because information gathered during the CFSR process indicates that each child in foster care receives a periodic review every 6 months.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Cabinet policy requires that periodic reviews take place at least every 6 months until a child achieves permanency. The reviews must include biological parents, foster care providers, children age 8 and older, Guardians ad Litem (GALs), case workers, supervisors, and objective third parties. TWIST issues ticklers to case managers to alert them to upcoming due dates for reviews. Regional administrative staff also receives reports of upcoming review dates.

In addition to the Cabinet's 6-month reviews, the Citizen Foster Care Review Boards (CFCRB) provide an in-depth case review of every child in foster care at least once every 6 months. In 2000, CFCRBs conducted over 14,000 reviews of 6,513 children. CFCRBs make recommendations to the court, the Governor, and the Legislative Research Commission regarding the laws, practices, policies and procedures for children in out-of-home placement and investigation of child abuse and neglect allegations. However, most CFCRB reviews look at case records only and do not invite outside parties to the review, which is required for a 6-month periodic review. Therefore they do not qualify as administrative reviews.

Stakeholders commenting on this item were in general agreement that the 6-month reviews occur regularly and in a timely manner. However, some stakeholders in one county reported that caseworkers sometimes use other workers, family members, or friends as the "objective third party." They expressed concern about the objectivity of these individuals during the review process. A few stakeholders suggested that the periodic reviews and the CFCRB reviews constitute a burden for the caseworkers and that the process should be combined so that there is only one review. It was noted that if all parties to the case were invited to the CFCRB review, then this review could be considered the administrative case review.

**Item 27. Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.**

☐ Strength                      ☒ X Area Needing Improvement



Item 27 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because permanency hearings are not consistently held in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Kentucky policy requires that a dispositional hearing or annual permanency hearing is held in the court of jurisdiction no later than 12 months from the date the Cabinet assumes custody of a child. In addition, hearings must be held every 12 months thereafter until the child achieves permanency. The appropriateness of the permanency goal is assessed by the Court. After a goal has been entered by the Court, it may not be changed without an additional dispositional hearing.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, annual dispositional hearings are tracked through the TWIST management report and the Children in Placement Report. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the child welfare agency to inform the court when the child needs a review. The courts should be notified 60 days prior to permanency hearings to facilitate scheduling. In some regions of the State, courts have begun to set the date for the annual dispositional hearing at the time of the initial disposition. The Statewide Assessment also indicated that there have been problems related to convening the permanency hearings in a timely manner.

A few State-level Stakeholders commenting on this item during the on-site phase of the CFSR reported that the timeliness and thoroughness of permanency hearings varies by jurisdiction. This perception was supported by stakeholder comments in the different counties included in the review. In Jefferson County, for example, stakeholders expressed the opinion that reviews are conducted in a timely manner and that the agency has expedited matters by reducing delays in providing the necessary paperwork. In Warren County, however, stakeholders identified several barriers to timely 12-month permanency hearings, including the fact that workers do not submit the paperwork to the court in a timely manner. Some stakeholders also expressed concern that if the caseworker does not notify the court of the need for a review, the court might “lose” the child. A key problem identified by stakeholders was that because the Cabinet’s workers are responsible for tracking the timelines of permanency hearings rather than the court tracking these children and putting the cases on the docket, there is an opportunity for delays in the process when workers do not inform the courts in a timely manner.

**Item 28. Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.**

☐ Strength      ☒ Area Needing Improvement

Item 28 was rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the State is not consistently proceeding with the termination of parental rights in a timely manner.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Cabinet policy requires that TPR be considered at the 12-month permanency hearing. In making the determination regarding whether to seek TPR, caseworkers and supervisors assess progress toward reunification for all children who have been in foster care for 12 months. If TPR is not considered, the Cabinet must present compelling reasons to the court as to why TPR is not in the best interest of the child and must provide supporting documentation from professional partners and community resources. If TPR is deemed to be not in the best interest of the child at a particular hearing, the worker must provide information to the court to enable the court to reconsider TPR at each subsequent permanency hearing.

Stakeholders commenting on this area were in general agreement that although there are procedures in place for seeking TPR, there are barriers to achieving TPR in a timely manner. The primary barriers identified are the TPR appeals process and crowded court dockets. Some stakeholders reported that exceptions to pursuing TPR tend to be made for older children and/or children with a bond with their families. Other stakeholders noted that there is some reluctance on the part of judges and GALs to pursue TPR for older children.

**Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.**

☐ Strength      ☒ Area Needing Improvement

Item 29 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the State does not consistently notify foster parent, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of hearings nor are they consistently provided an opportunity to be heard in accordance with the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Kentucky statute requires Cabinet staff to notify caregivers about all periodic reviews and permanency hearings relating to children in their care. Notification is made by letter, phone call, or face-to-face contact. Caseworkers must document in the case record when and by what method children's caregivers were notified of hearings. Attendance of caregivers also is to be documented in the case record.

The Foster Care Census of all Cabinet foster homes found that 69 percent of foster parents are consistently notified of case conferences and more than 60 percent stated that they are consistently invited to court hearings. Approximately 12 percent reported that they had never been invited to a court hearing and 12 percent reported that they had never been invited to a case conference.

The Statewide Assessment also reported the findings of a focus group conducted with members of the Foster Parent Association. Seventy-five percent of the foster parents in this group said that they are notified some or all of the time regarding case conferences, and 40 percent said that they are invited to court hearings at least some of the time. However, three foster parents noted that when they attended a court hearing, the judge would not let them speak.

Stakeholders interviewed during the on-site phase of the CFSR were in general agreement that foster parents and pre-adoptive parents receive notification of court hearings and administrative reviews. There was less agreement among stakeholders as to whether foster parents have the opportunity to be heard. Some stakeholders observed that foster parents actively participate in hearings and that judges are responsive to what foster parents have to say. However, other stakeholders noted that whether foster parents are allowed to enter the court and/or participate in hearings varies by judge.

### III. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

#### STATUS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Kentucky is in compliance with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

**Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children.**

  X   Strength             Area Needing Improvement

Item 30 is rated as a Strength because the State has developed and implements standards to ensure the protection of the health and safety of children in foster care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, State statutes, standards of practice (SOP), and internal and external monitoring systems ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services. The Kentucky Administrative Regulations establish licensure requirements for child-caring and child-placing agencies, residential child-caring facilities, child-caring facilities, and requirements for foster families. In addition, Kentucky's Cabinet for Families and Children is accredited through the Council on Accreditation. Kentucky is one of three State child welfare programs with COA status.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that Kentucky Revised Statutes, Kentucky Administrative Regulations, and the Cabinet's Protection & Permanency standards of practices were developed or revised to reflect changes required by the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). A policy collaboration team is responsible for facilitating the development of clearly defined standards of practice.

Stakeholders commenting on this topic noted that COA accreditation and ASFA have helped to set standards for child welfare practice, including standards for worker caseloads. In addition, stakeholders noted that the Cabinet requires all treatment facilities to be accredited.

**Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.**

☒ Strength                      ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 31 is rated as a Strength because the State maintains an effective quality assurance system that evaluates and measures program strengths and areas needing improvement.

According to the Statewide Assessment the Cabinet has a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process that is designed to assess the effectiveness of services and that involves all Cabinet staff in the evaluation of internal systems, procedures, and outcomes. All staff members are on at least one CQI team. Every region has a designated CQI Specialist who coordinates the quality assurance process at the local level. The Cabinet also employs a child welfare researcher to assist in the ongoing development and consultation of practices related to quality assurance improvement.

In addition to the CQI, the Cabinet has implemented a Peer Record Case Review process, which is a formal three-tiered process to improve practice and provide data to identify trends and issues. Each month, TWIST randomly selects four cases from each local supervisor's team. These cases are reviewed by caseworkers, supervisors, and managers using a standardized instrument. Each section of the review instrument aggregates results of these three level reviews. This information is made available to the county, Region, and State.

Another quality assurance process is the Quality Services Review (QSR). This project has been implemented in partnership with the Center for the Study of Social Policy in Washington, D.C. and the Child Welfare and Practice Group in Alabama. The QSR is designed to assess the quality of services delivered to families receiving child protection services and those at-risk of abusing or neglecting their children. As part of the QSR, interviews are conducted with parents, children, extended family members, and community stakeholders serving the case. Finally, the CFCRB described under item 26 also serves as a form of QA for the Cabinet.

The Statewide Assessment also notes that there is a Children's Review Program (CRP) that monitors children's progress as they proceed through Kentucky's out-of-home care system. CRP conducts annual program reviews as a quality improvement intervention for residential treatment programs. The purpose is to monitor the substantive clinical aspects of care and to assure that services are consistent with the residents' needs and assigned level of care.

Other quality assurance methods noted in the Statewide Assessment were the following:

- The Foster Care Census which gathers data on the well-being of children in foster care through home visits to every Cabinet foster and pre-adoptive home.
- The publication of "All Families Matter," an annual outcomes report.
- Random exit interviews that are held with children leaving out-of-home care or who change placements while in foster care.
- Satisfaction surveys, focus groups, and "secret shopper" telephone inquiries in which designated staff posed as prospective foster parents to assess how the local office processes the call.

Stakeholders commenting on this topic generally expressed positive opinions about the Cabinet's CQI process. They noted, for example, that monthly CQI meetings are held consistently and have been helpful in resolving issues. The Foster Care Review Board also was mentioned as a useful mechanism for receiving feedback on the quality of case services.

#### IV. TRAINING

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

#### STATUS OF TRAINING

Kentucky is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of training. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

**Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services.**

\_\_\_X\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Item 32 is rated as a Strength because the State provides a strong staff development and training program for staff as well as initial training for all newly hired staff. The Public Child Welfare Certification Program is an outstanding preparation process for undergraduate social work students.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Cabinet maintains a Division of Professional Development and Training that works in conjunction with the University Training Consortium. This consortium is a partnership between the Cabinet and eight public universities. All new staff attends the Protection and Permanency Training Academy during the first 3 months of employment.

Each core competency training program is evaluated during the training at two levels: trainee satisfaction and degree of knowledge and skill advancement. In addition, experienced trainers conduct third-party trainer evaluations for the purpose of identifying trainer

strengths and competencies, as well as areas needing improvement. Learning Development Teams (LDT) consisting of regional and university staff provide updates on training materials.

The Public Child Welfare Certification Program, available for undergraduate students, allows students, at the Cabinet's expense, to participate in the program in exchange for a 2-year commitment to work for the Cabinet. Ninety-two percent of employees participating in the program remained on the job at one year, and 82 percent at two years, compared to a 50 percent turnover rate for other Cabinet employees.

The Statewide Assessment also identified the following training needs based on information obtained from focus groups, interviews and consultations:

- Attention to writing and consultation skills;
- The need to link training with the development of standards of practice;
- New staff in training should not have a caseload; and
- Training is not fully supported in the field.

Most Stakeholders commenting on this topic expressed positive opinions about the Cabinet's training program for new staff. Some stakeholders praised the success of the Public Child Welfare Certification Program in preparing and helping to retain staff. They also mentioned the use of Field Training Specialists to provide mentoring in the field. Stakeholders in Jefferson County mentioned cross-training with judges, police, and Private Child Care providers (PCC). In Warren County, stakeholders noted that caseworkers do not carry caseloads while they are being trained and have the opportunity to shadow more experienced workers.

Despite the generally positive views of the initial training, several stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of caseworker skills in conducting comprehensive assessments and/or knowledge about how to effectively use information obtained from a comprehensive assessment. This was supported by the findings of the case reviews. Stakeholders also noted, however, that the Cabinet recognizes that improvements are needed in the transfer of training to on the job performance. These stakeholders reported that to resolve this performance barrier, the Cabinet has implemented a program in some regions in which case managers are assigned to work with Field Training Specialists who are experienced frontline workers trained in coaching and mentoring. Stakeholders commenting on this program indicated that the initial evaluation findings demonstrate improved job performance. All sixteen regions will participate in this model by the end of 2004.

**Item 33. The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.**

☒ Strength      ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 33 was rated as a Strength because ongoing training for staff provides them with additional skills and knowledge required for their job responsibilities.

According to the Statewide Assessment, all Cabinet employees are expected to obtain 20 hours of training each year. In addition to the mandatory training, several advanced and specialized classes are available for tenured staff. The Training Record Information System (TRIS) maintains records of all staff training activities.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, tenured staff has the opportunity to earn up to 9 credit hours each year in addition to advanced in-service training and refresher classes. In addition, the MSW stipend program allows a limited number of staff in supervisory positions to obtain a Master's of Social Work degree on work time. Supervisors may also request training called "Just in Time" training. Finally, supervisors contribute to a feedback system called "Partners in Learning" that focuses on verification of workers' effectiveness connected to the training they have received.

Stakeholders commenting on this topic at the State and local levels reported that ongoing training is available as part of a continuum of training and professional development. Stakeholders noted that training is effective and available and that workers are encouraged to participate. Stakeholders mentioned the usefulness of leadership training for Regional administrators. Some stakeholders at the local level expressed a need for training on more specific topics, particularly topics related to preparing for court and testifying in court. In one county, some stakeholders commented that training regarding consulting with external stakeholders and customer service should be improved. In another county several stakeholders expressed a desire for training on specific topics, such as assessment of families' needs and permanency options for youth.

**Item 34. The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.**

☒ Strength      ☐ Area Needing Improvement



Item 34 was rated as a Strength because training is provided for all current and prospective foster and adoptive parents and staff of child care facilities. This training provides them with the basic skills and knowledge necessary to effectively parent the children in their care.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Kentucky uses the “Group Preparation and Selection of Foster and Adoptive Families, Model Approach to Parenting and Partnership” (GPS-MAP) curriculum. Foster parents are required to receive at least 30 hours of this training, which is offered at least quarterly in all service regions of the State. The training addresses such topics as attachment, child behavior management and discipline, grief/loss and separation, and theories of development. Additional trainings include Deciding Together, Child Sexual Abuse, medically fragile children, Lifebooks, Medical Passport, and Behavior Management. Training opportunities are available during the day, and on nights and weekends.

In addition to the training programs, every newly approved resource family in Kentucky has the opportunity to participate in the Resource Parent Mentor Program that is currently staffed by two full-time program coordinators and over 200 trained mentors. Since January 2003, participation in this program is required for all newly approved foster families. A resource parent State conference also is held annually. Approximately 250 parents attend this event which consists of 6 to 8 workshops conducted during a weekend.

Ongoing training is provided in areas targeted by the social worker and the foster/adoptive parent. A minimum 6 hours of ongoing training is required for foster parents, depending on the level of foster care. The Training Record Information System (TRIS) maintains training records for foster and adoptive parents. In the Kentucky Foster Care Census, approximately 90 percent of foster parents interviewed responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The training I received over the past 2 years has been valuable to my work.”

Most stakeholders commenting on this topic at the State and local levels expressed the opinion that both the initial training and the ongoing foster parent training are effective. Local stakeholders noted that training on specific topics is available, including becoming a concurrent planning family, working with birth parents, and working with medically fragile children. However, some stakeholders expressed the need for training on other specific topics (e.g., reactive attachment disorder, working with special needs children, sign language). In one county, stakeholders stated that although foster parent training has improved, more improvements are needed. Also, many stakeholders noted that training is required only for licensed foster parents, although relative caregivers who have been formally approved must participate in the MAPP training. Kinship caregivers (who are neither licensed nor approved) are not required to participate in training but may if they request it. Finally, some stakeholders at the county level also expressed concern that some foster parents may not be able to access training because they do not have child care.

## V. SERVICE ARRAY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2X	3	4

### STATUS OF SERVICE ARRAY

Kentucky is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

**Item 35. The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      X Area Needing Improvement

Item 35 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Although the State has a broad array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families, the Statewide Assessment and the on site review show significant gaps in services, in addition to concerns regarding service accessibility in some areas of the State.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there is a broad array of services to meet the individualized needs of families and children in Kentucky. This array includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Comprehensive Family Services (CFS), which offer individualized, community-based, wraparound services.
- Family Reunification Services, which are available 24 hours per day.
- Family Preservation Services, which are available 24 hours per day.
- Impact and Impact Plus services for severely emotionally disturbed children and their families.
- Home Visitation services designed to increase parental capacity.
- CATS, which is a comprehensive family assessment of child attachment issues.

- The Targeted Assessment Project (TAP), which is available in 18 counties and offers assessment, pretreatment, and follow-up services for women with issues of domestic violence, mental health, and learning needs.

The Statewide Assessment also identified the following gaps in service array based on information from agency staff and community partners:

- Mental health services
- Domestic violence services
- Sexual offender services
- Substance abuse services
- Respite Care services
- Insufficient transportation to access services
- Medical care and counseling services for indigent adults
- Child care services for parents who work evening and night shifts
- Services for children age 12 and older

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, of 1,134 foster/adoptive parents interviewed for the Kentucky Foster Care Census, only 53 percent felt that their local service array was adequate to meet the needs of children in their care. They cited the need for after-school programs, mental health counseling and care, dental care, peer group activities, and rehabilitation therapies.

Stakeholders commenting on this topic expressed opinions that are consistent with information provided in the Statewide Assessment. Although most stakeholders suggested that there is a large array of services available to children and families, many service gaps were identified. These included foster homes, therapeutic foster homes, inpatient substance abuse services, substance abuse groups for adolescents, domestic violence services, job training, post-adoptive services, dentists who accept Medicaid, mental retardation services, early intervention, and psychiatrists. Several stakeholders expressed concern about the waits that must be encountered by children and families to receive services. As one stakeholder expressed it: “Services are a mile wide and an inch deep.” A few stakeholders reported that transportation is a barrier to service participation.

**Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State’s CFSP.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_X\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Item 36 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because the State's service array is not readily available in all counties. There are waiting lists for needed services and families experience difficulty in accessing needed services.

According to the Statewide Assessment, some services described in item 35 are not accessible or available to families and children in all of Kentucky's counties. There are more gaps in the service array in rural areas of the State than in the urban areas. In addition, some of the services listed in item 35 have limited slots and waiting lists. Limited funding for contract services such as family preservation has resulted in reduced service availability.

Stakeholders commenting on this topic reported that there were significant gaps in services both within and across counties. One concern identified by State and Local level stakeholders was lack of transportation to services within counties. Stakeholders noted however, that churches, private providers, transportation aides, and other resources have been used to meet transportation needs. Stakeholders mentioned that there can be a long wait for Medicaid cards and for services, including psychological evaluations, mental health services, parenting classes, housing, reunification services and Impact Plus. In one county, it was noted that children need to be driven 94 miles to an orthodontist in another county.

**Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.**

☒X\_\_\_ Strength     \_\_\_Area Needing Improvement

Item 37 is rated as a Strength because services can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families. Comprehensive Family Services is an excellent example of local community collaboration to craft an array of services tailored to meet the needs of individual families and children.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the Cabinet's philosophy for the provision of services is an individualized, community-based service array designed to meet the needs of children and families. These needs are identified with the family through a comprehensive family assessment. These needs are identified with the family through the use of a tool called the Comprehensive Quality Assessment (CQA). The CQA is a structured decision making process that guides the worker in rating risk and risk levels and focuses on comprehensive (rather than incident-based) family-based assessments. It is a revision of the formerly used Universal Family Risk Assessment. The CQA measures level of maltreatment, sequence of events of maltreatment, family development stages, family discipline, adult patterns of behavior, child's development, and systems for family support. Cabinet workers use findings of maltreatment, the CQA, and consultation with the supervisor to determine follow-up actions on an individual case-by-case basis.

Despite the ability of the CQA to promote individualized services, some stakeholders reported that, although services can be individualized, it is not consistently practiced among the regions. Stakeholders mentioned that services are individualized through the work of the Vision Committee, through Comprehensive Family Services (CFS), and via needs assessments.

## VI. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4X

### STATUS OF AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Kentucky is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

**Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP.**

  X   Strength             Area Needing Improvement

Item 38 is rated as a Strength because there is broad collaboration with other agencies in the development of the goals and objectives for the State's Child and Family Services Plan.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the CFSP is developed in conjunction with representatives from other agencies including the Administrative Office of the Court, the Children's Review Program, and child advocacy groups. The CFSP for 2002-2004 incorporates ongoing consultation in the form of focus groups, workgroups, training, discussing reports, and surveys. Focus groups include external partners such as families, community stakeholders (courts, schools, mental health, domestic violence, faith

communities, and other contract providers), prospective foster and adoptive families, and community leaders. There are no Federally recognized tribes in Kentucky.

Stakeholders included in the CSFR process commenting on this area were in general agreement that the Cabinet has strong collaborations with external stakeholders on the State and local levels. Stakeholders noted that the Cabinet has close working relationships with community partners, courts, schools, and service providers, and engages families, foster parents, staff and community agencies in the customer satisfaction process. Stakeholders said that the Cabinet's VISION communities play an important role in establishing consultation with community partners.

**Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP.**

☒ Strength      ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 39 is rated as a Strength because the State collaborates with internal and external partners in the development of the annual Child and Family Services Plan.

According to the Statewide Assessment, representatives are consulted regarding the service delivery described in the CFSR and quarterly meetings with stakeholders and community partners are held in each Region of the State. Stakeholder involvement in evaluating progress toward goals occurs in several ways: 1) through the peer review monitoring tool; 2) through the local VISION and stakeholder advisory groups; 3) through Community Collaboration for Children regional network quarterly meetings; and 4) through the Citizens Review Panel Foster Review Panel Board, and Administrative Office of the Courts liaisons.

**Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.**

☒ Strength      ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 40 is rated as a Strength because the Cabinet engages in extensive collaboration with other agencies to insure the coordination of services.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Kentucky Educational Collaborative for State Agency Children is a major support in addressing the educational needs of children in foster care. The Cabinet, the Department of Education and the Department of Juvenile Justice develop a biennial plan regarding education programs for State agency children.

State level stakeholders commented that the Cabinet collaborates with other programs and agencies such as mental health and the children's committee to implement better services. Regular meetings are held with other service systems to look at issues related to children's well-being.

## VII. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3X	4

### Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

Kentucky is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. Findings with regard to the specific items assessed for this factor are presented below.

#### Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.

☒ X Strength      ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength because the agency consistently implements standards that conform with recognized national guidelines.

According to the Statewide Assessment, title 922 of the Kentucky Statutes outlines the requirements for foster, adoptive, and kinship homes. The Cabinet maintains and implements standards for foster family homes. The Division of Licensing and Regulation

establishes the standards for all residential facilities and child-caring/child-placing agencies. However, the Statewide Assessment notes that there is some variation in the standards for Cabinet foster homes and private child care foster homes (e.g., physical exams, number of children, and hours of training).

The Statewide Assessment indicates that several methods are used to monitor the quality and effectiveness of licensed providers, including annual re-licensure surveys, licensure investigations when non-compliance is reported, quality program monitoring by the Children's Review Program (CRP) and regular monitoring of children's progress by CRP.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue expressed the opinion that licensure of foster homes by the Cabinet is completed in a timely manner. In addition, stakeholders noted that relatives involved in Kinship Care do not have the same training or licensing requirements as non-relative foster families.

**Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.**

☐ Strength      ☒ Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 was assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement because the State maintains two sets of licensing standards for foster homes. The differences in the Standards are the required training hours and curriculum, frequency of physical exams, and number of children. For example, Cabinet licensed homes are required to participate in MAPP; private licensed homes are not required to participate in this training.

According to the Statewide Assessment, there is some variation in the standards for Cabinet foster homes and PCC foster homes such as training requirements, physical examinations, and number of children. In addition, PCC providers are not as consistent in applying standards of practice to their foster homes. Expectations for relative foster care are the same as non-relative foster care except for some flexibility in relation to the applicant's age. All residential facilities and child-caring/child-placing agencies must meet the statutory requirements of the Division of Licensing and Regulation.

The Cabinet has several different methods to monitor the quality and effectiveness of licensed providers. This includes annual re-licensure surveys, licensure investigations when non-compliance is reported, quality program monitoring by the Children's Review Program (CRP) and regular monitoring of children's progress by CRP.



Stakeholders commenting on this area reported that Cabinet foster homes are re-evaluated annually, while PCC homes and facilities are evaluated biannually. Stakeholders also reported that there are differences in the training standards for Cabinet foster homes and Private Child Care (PCC) foster homes. In one county, stakeholders expressed concern that PCC resource homes have different eligibility and training requirements than Cabinet foster homes. Stakeholders were particularly concerned about PCC service provision and the lack of structure to support intensive home-based services.

**Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.**

☒ Strength                      ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 43 is rated as a Strength because the State completes a criminal records clearance prior to the approval of all foster and adoptive homes.

According to the Statewide Assessment, all foster/adoptive, relative foster, and Kinship Care families are required to undergo a criminal background check. In a random review of regions it was determined that various methods are being used to obtain an individual's criminal history. For in-State criminal records checks, most regions obtain the information from the Administrative Office of the Courts or Courtnet system. Out-of-State criminal records checks are being requested directly from the State of previous residence. Other regions submit a thumb print ID card to the Kentucky State Police. Some also do city and county police checks using local methods. All regions of the State complete child/adult abuse/neglect checks via the State's automated child welfare information system (TWIST). The child/spouse abuse registry is checked for previous allegations, as well.

Stakeholders commenting on this topic generally agreed that criminal background checks are conducted. In two counties, stakeholders noted that criminal background checks are conducted annually during the re-licensure of Cabinet foster care homes.

**Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.**

☒ Strength                      ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 44 is rated as a Strength because the State implements a statewide recruitment of foster and adoptive homes that reflect the needs of children requiring placement.

According to the Statewide Assessment, the Cabinet has initiated a Diligent Recruitment Plan to meet the needs of the ethnic and racial diversity of children in foster care. The plan emphasizes the need for more homes for teenagers, sibling groups, medically fragile children and African-American youths.

For children with an identified placement barrier such as age or need, the Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP) provides a second level of targeted recruitment services. In 2001, 555 children were registered with SNAP and 109 were placed (19.6%). SNAP workers employ the following strategies: the Family First initiative, specialized recruitment (data and a picture of every child registered to SNAP is on a CD-ROM and provided to all regions and newly approved resource homes), monthly meetings with the Tri-State Adoption Coalition, and weekly television features highlighting specific children.

Other efforts include recruitment aimed at medical professionals, faith-based outreach, and bonuses to foster and adoptive parents who recruit and follow-up with people interested in becoming foster and adoptive parents. Some specific recruitment methods being used are: adoption fair; Roots and Heritage Festival; Wellness fair, KIDZ First Expo; recruitment at local hospitals, partner schools at community events, at churches, radio, and television media spots; videoconferencing to reach families in rural areas; and One Church One Child.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Kentucky needs additional homes for medically fragile children, teenagers, minority children, and children with severe emotional and behavioral problems. Family to Family, a Casey Foundation model that encourages neighborhood-based foster care and targeted recruitment, has been implemented in one region and is being expanded to two regions in 2003.

Stakeholders commenting on this topic at the State level reported that the Cabinet has improved efforts at diligent recruitment of foster families. In Jefferson County, stakeholders described neighborhood-based efforts to recruit foster families as well as efforts to recruit Spanish-speaking foster families. However, local-level stakeholders noted that there is a need for foster homes for adolescents, large sibling groups, Spanish-speaking children, African-Americans, and medically fragile children.

**Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.**

☒ Strength

☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 45 is rated as a strength because the State designates staff through the SNAP program to promote and facilitate the cross-jurisdictional placement of waiting children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, cross-jurisdictional placements are facilitated through the Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP). SNAP is designed to offer specialized recruitment efforts for children waiting for permanent placements. This includes the use of the media, postings of children, and registration with adoption exchanges. For several years, the Cabinet has worked with selected adoption agencies in other States which have well-prepared families available and which provide good after-placement and legalization services.

SNAP has 6 full-time specialists and provides up-to-date information on children available for adoption on its website, CD-ROM and in the SNAP book, which is available at libraries throughout the State. Children participating in SNAP are featured on weekly television spots, and four picnics are held each year to allow prospective adoptive parents to meet the children.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue noted that cross-jurisdictional placements occur. In one county, stakeholders mentioned two SNAP adoptions in other States.

## **XI. DETERMINATION OF SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMITY**

For each outcome and systemic factor listed below, mark “Y” where the State is determined to be in substantial conformity and “N” where the State is determined not to be in substantial conformity. For each outcome or systemic factor marked “N,” place a check beside the performance indicator, listed by item number in this form, that has been determined to be an area needing improvement.

### Outcomes

#### **I. Safety**

##### N **Outcome S1**

x Item 1

x Item 2

##### N **Outcome S2**

x Item 3

Item 4

#### **II. Permanency**

##### N **Outcome P1**

x Item 5

x Item 6

x Item 7

x Item 8

x Item 9

Item 10

##### N **Outcome P2**

Item 11

x Item 12

x Item 13

x Item 14

x Item 15

x Item 16

### **III. Child and Family Well-Being**

#### N **Outcome WB1**

x Item 17

x Item 18

x Item 19

x Item 20

#### Y **Outcome WB2**

Item 21

#### N **Outcome WB3**

Item 22

x Item 23

### Systemic Factors

#### Y **Statewide Information System**

Item 24

#### N **Case Review System**

x Item 25

Item 26

x Item 27

x Item 28

x Item 29

#### Y **Quality Assurance System**

Item 30

Item 31

#### Y **Training**

Item 32

Item 33

Item 34

#### N **Service Array**

x Item 35

x Item 36

Item 37

#### Y **Agency Responsiveness to the Community**

Item 38

Item 39

Item 40

#### Y **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention**

Item 41

Item 42

Item 43

Item 44

Item 45